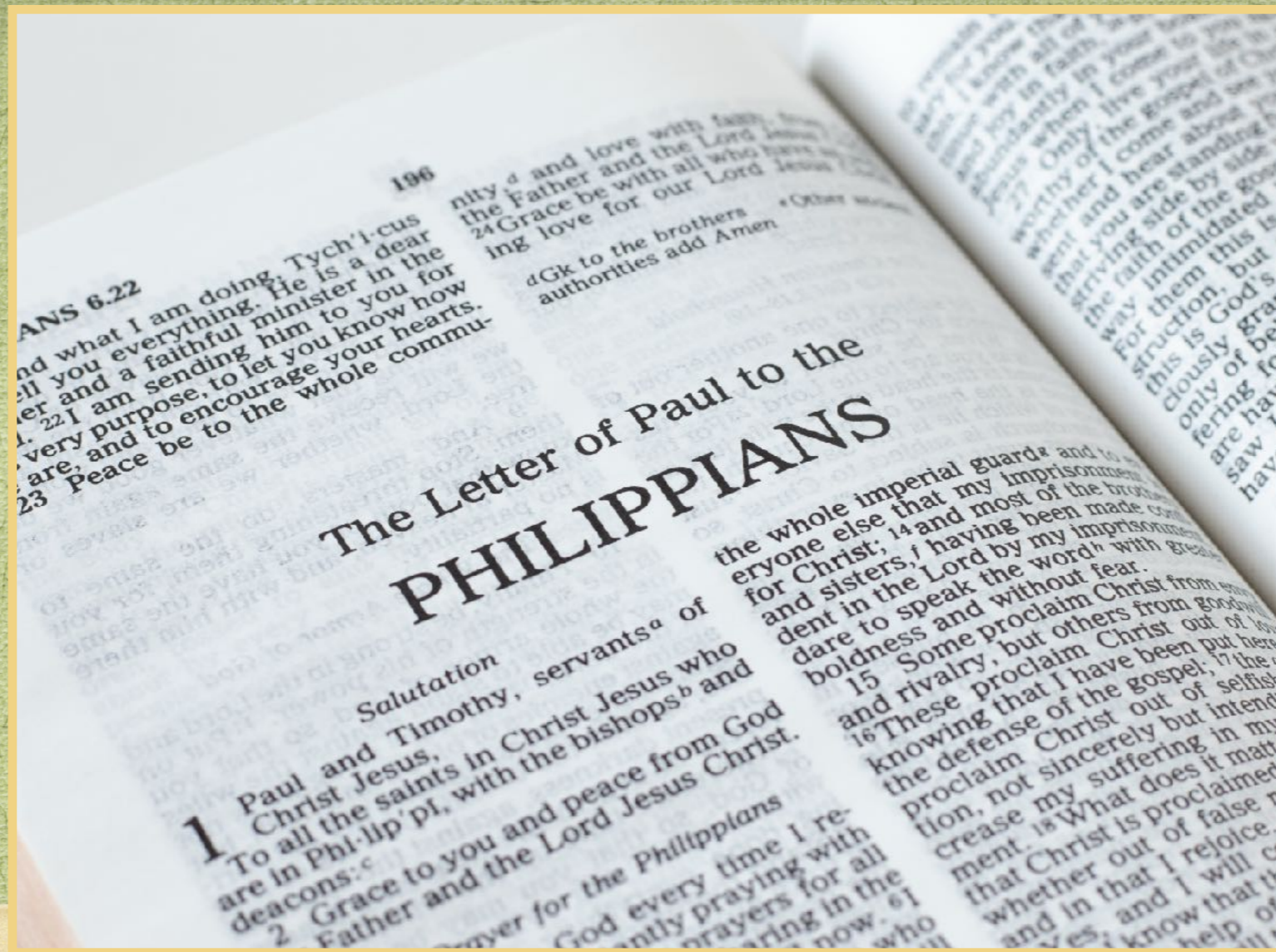


- 1: Introduction — Acts 16:1–19; Romans 8:35–39
- 2: Acts 16:19–40; Paul & Silas in prison
- 3: Philippians 1:1–11
- 4: Philippians 1:12–21
- 5: Philippians 1:22–30
- 6: Philippians 2:1–11
- 7: Philippians 2:12–16
- 8: Philippians 2:16–30
- 9: Philippians 3:1–7
- 10: Philippians 3:7–14
- 11: Philippians 3:15–21
- 12: Philippians 4:1–8
- 13: Philippians 4:9–23



Acts 15:40—16:1–19; 2 Corinthians 8:1–5

*Introduction*

The epistle to the Philippians was written from Rome during Paul's first imprisonment there, more than ten years after Paul had first preached the gospel at Philippi. Luke describes the circumstances of the apostle's first visit to Philippi in Acts 16. While at Troas, on the northwest coast of Asia Minor about AD 50, the apostle had received a vision in which he beheld "a man of Macedonia" pleading with him, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:8, 9). Paul and his companions, Silas, Timothy, and Luke, responded immediately, and went by way of Neapolis to Philippi, the first place in Europe where the gospel was preached. There the missionaries joined a little group of worshipers by the river outside the city. Standing out among those present was Lydia, "a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira." (*SDA BC*, condensed)

Lydia and her household readily received the apostles' message, were converted and baptized. Afterward, as Paul and Silas went about their work of teaching, they met a slave girl possessed of a spirit of divination.

When Paul cast out the spirit, her former masters stirred up a mob against the apostles, with the result that Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into prison.

Then came an earthquake at midnight, followed by the conversion of the jailer and his family. Thus the

Philippian church was formed, with its charter members the purple-seller from Thyatira and her household, the jailer, who was probably a Roman, and his household, and others. (Ibid.)

Several years later, on his way back to Jerusalem, as he completed his Third Missionary Tour, Paul stopped again at Philippi. It was the time of the Passover, and the apostle kept the feast with the believers. (Ibid.)

Soon after his return to Jerusalem, Paul was arrested and imprisoned at Caesarea for at least two years (Acts 24:27). Then came the trip to Rome, where he spent “two whole years in his own hired house” (Acts 28:30). Doubtless it was during this period of imprisonment that Paul wrote his epistle to the Philippian church, as well as the letters to the Colossians, the Ephesians, and to Philemon. Rome is not mentioned in the Epistle to the Philippians, but Paul’s reference to Caesar’s household (ch. 4:22) and his expectation of a speedy release (ch. 2:24) suggest Rome as the place of writing. (Ibid.)

From the letter one gains considerable insight into the situation at Philippi, the condition of Paul, and the Philippian believers. The church at Philippi was led by bishops and deacons (ch. 1:1). Its members were suffering persecution (v. 29). Apparently there had been some tendency to discord, but there is no hint of moral corruption or erroneous doctrine. There is little to disturb the joy and thankfulness with which the apostle contemplates the Philippians' growth in grace. Their love for him is unchanged. They had sent Epaphroditus, one of their leaders, to convey their gifts and to minister to Paul in his affliction (ch. 2:25). Paul thought that he might be released soon, and expressed a hope of shortly seeing them again (chs. 1:26; 2:24). Later, he was freed and for a time worked among the churches he had helped to establish, possibly including the church at Philippi (see *AA* 487). (Ibid.)

The immediate occasion for the writing of the letter was that Epaphroditus, who had been seriously ill during part of his stay with Paul in Rome, was now well enough to return home to Philippi (ch. 2:25–30). The church was eager to have Epaphroditus come to them, and Paul wished to take advantage of the opportunity to send a message thanking his friends for sending him gifts, telling them of his condition, and reminding them of his prayerful interest in them. (Ibid.)



The Epistle to the Philippians is a letter from a friend to friends, a letter of spiritual counsel about his bonds, the progress of the gospel at Rome, the inward peace and joy he had in all his afflictions. He tells them of the uncertainty of his future, that he does not know how his trial will end, in death or in life, but that he is prepared for either event. (Ibid.)

The call was imperative, admitting of no delay. “After he had seen the vision,” declares **Luke**, who accompanied **Paul** and **Silas** and **Timothy** on the journey across to Europe, “immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony.” (AA 211.2)



Crossing the Aegean by boat from Troas in Asia Minor, Paul and Silas made their way to the Roman colony of Philippi, approximately ten miles inland from the port of Neapolis. It was a Roman colony with a considerable number of Roman citizens and active soldiers. It was a leading city of Macedonia, and the great east-west Roman road Via Egnatia ran through the center of town. As a Roman colony it used Roman law, and its constitution was modeled on that of Rome. Philippi was a town whose citizens were protected by Roman might and Roman right. (Ronald Springett, *Ministry*, June 1983)

And teach customs, which are not lawful for us  
to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.  
(Acts 16:21)

Jewish persecution of Christians is a common theme in Acts, such as in Acts 4:1–3. The accusation at Philippi, however, is different because the charges are brought by Gentiles concerning the Roman law.

**Philippi.** Originally known as Krenides, which means springs or a place of small fountains, the city was rebuilt by Philip of Macedon (359–336 BC), father of Alexander the Great, and named in his honor. Between Neapolis and Philippi there lay a range of mountains, in which were rich deposits of gold and silver. Exploitation of these mines gave Philip an income of as much as 1000 talents a year.





During the period of Macedonian supremacy Philippi had no particular importance, but in 42 BC, a battle resulted in Roman forces taking over the city, and Rome established a colony. Paul later came to Philippi, about 90 years later, in the fall/winter of AD 49 and established the church of the Philippians.

An archaeological site of Philippi exists at the foot of an acropolis in northeastern Greece on the ancient route linking Europe with Asia—the Via Egnatia. Later the city became a center of Christian faith due to the work of Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke.

God's Spirit can only enlighten the understanding of those who are willing to be enlightened. We read that God opened the ears of Lydia, so that she attended to the message spoken by Paul. To declare the whole counsel of God and all that was essential for Lydia to receive — this was the part Paul was to act in her conversion; and then the God of all grace exercised His power, leading the soul in the right way. God and the human agent cooperated, and the work was wholly successful (Letter 150, 1900).

*(6BC 1062.2)*

















If you visit Philippi, make a point of going off the beaten track on the way from the town center to the theater. Follow the bottom of the rocky hillside. You will find a gruesome site: a set of three rock carvings of a woman in a short cloak, kneeling on the back of a deer whose head she is pulling back in order to slit its throat. This is a sanctuary of the goddess Artemis or, in her Roman guise, Diana. Continue to the theater and climb right up to the back of the auditorium, then onto the hillside beyond. Carved into the rocks are dozens of pictures of women.

Many are representations of Artemis. (<https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/philippi/>)

**Spirit of divination.** Textual evidence favors the reading “a Python spirit.” In Greek mythology Python was a dragon or serpent who was thought to have guarded the oracle at Delphi. Python was worshipped at Delphi as the symbol of wisdom, and the name “Python” was given to those who, by practicing ventriloquism, were credited with extraordinary powers. Shrill cries were used by the priestesses at Delphi, and it is clear that the local population believed that the slave possessed supernatural abilities, and her wild cries were probably received as oracles. Her masters took advantage of her to gain financially. (*SDA BC*, with edits)

The apostles suffered extreme torture because of the painful position in which they were left, but they did not murmur. Instead, in the utter darkness and desolation of the dungeon, they encouraged each other by words of prayer and sang praises to God because they were found worthy to suffer shame for His sake. Their hearts were cheered by a deep and earnest love for the cause of their Redeemer. Paul thought of the persecution he had been instrumental in bringing upon the disciples of Christ, and he rejoiced that his eyes had been opened to see, and his heart to feel, the power of the glorious truths which once he despised. (AA 213.4)