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## ABOUT THE BOOK

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As you read through the book of Philippians you were to answer some initial questions about the author and recipients. We can also learn background information from other sources. Today's notes are based largely on the Philippian syllabi from Spheres of Grace Ministries, but there are other websites you can glean historical information as well. Let's take a deeper look at the background of this letter to the Philippians.

**THE WRITER** - Paul identifies himself as the human writer with Timothy alongside him (Philippians 1:1).

It was written during Paul's Roman imprisonment (Philippians 1:7, 13).

Paul expected to be released and expected he would one day revisit Philippi (Philippians 1:25-27; 2:24).

The Epistle was written about 60 AD.

**THE CITY** - Philippi was located in Macedonia nine miles from the Aegean Sea, northwest of the island of Thasos. Neapolis was the nearest seaport. It was the chief city of that part of Macedonia, but Thessalonica was actually the capital city of that Roman province. The inhabitants were Greek, but were Roman citizens with the right to vote and govern themselves and they were considered anti-Semitic. There was no Jewish synagogue there. It had originally been a Phoenician mining town because of its location near the mines in the mountains and on the island of Thasos. Philip of Macedonia (the father of Alexander The Great) took the city and renamed it after himself. It ceased being a Roman republic and became a colony after a battle between the coalition of Octavius and Anthony and that of Brutus and Cassius. (Look at a Bible map if you have opportunity.)

**THE CHURCH** - Read Acts 15:36-16:-40

On Paul's second missionary journey, he and Silas recruited Timothy to assist them. When they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia and Bithynia, they went to Troas. (16:6-8) In a vision, Paul saw a man of Macedonia saying, "...Come over to Macedonia and help us" (16:9-10). So, the next day Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke went there to preach the Gospel to them.

On the Sabbath, they ministered to a group of women who were meeting by the river because there was no synagogue there. Lydia, a woman from Thyatira, "a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul" and she and her household were saved and baptized (16:12-15). Her house then became the meeting place of the new church (Acts 16:15,16:40).

Just after that we see Paul and Silas heal a slave girl that was demon possessed (vs.16- 24). Her masters, who used her powers to make money, accused Paul and Silas, as Jews, of teaching customs contrary to Roman law. So, they were beaten and thrown into prison. That night, Paul and Silas were singing and praying and God sent an earthquake which loosed their bonds and opened all the doors. (vs. 25-34) The jailor, fearing all his prisoners had escaped, was about to commit suicide, but Paul stopped him by informing him all his prisoners were still there. The jailor was saved that night along with all of his household. The rulers became fearful of them the next day when Paul revealed that he and Silas were both Roman citizens. (16:35-39 - my own side note, I love Paul's attitude: they humiliated us in public, "let them come themselves and bring us out". He wasn't about to be snuck out the back door secretly. That would have been too convenient for the chief magistrates. Instead he served them a slice of humble pie. Paul understood it was more than their reputations at stake and if he was to have any legitimacy upon his return he needed to be vindicated now. Also, remember the fact that Barnabas - who "had great dissension" with Paul [15:36-40] and ended up not going with Paul as planned, was not a Roman citizen but acc. to Acts 4:36 was Cyprian. If that little spat had not happened they would not have ALL been Roman citizens that were thrown into jail. Isn't God amazing that even in a situation like Barnabas and Paul disagreeing God was already using those details to accomplish His glory?)

So there we have it, this church in Philippi began with Lydia and her household, a converted witch girl, and the Philippian jailor with his household. You can understand the way they would feel about one another, what a special relationship they would have had with Paul and this group of believers sent gifts to him on a number of occasions.

At the writing of this epistle, Epaphroditus had been sent from the church at Philippi with a gift. After arriving in Rome, he found Paul's needs were greater than the gift he had brought and stayed there to raise money for him, but while he was there Epaphroditus got sick and almost died. After recovering from his illness, Paul sent him back to Philippi with this epistle, this letter to his friends.

THE OCCASION - The occasion of this epistle was to acknowledge the gift of money from the church at Philippi, to encourage them and reaffirm the principles of inner happiness that they had developed.

OUR PURPOSE - Our purpose for studying this epistle is to examine the principles we, too, need to develop in order to experience the happiness available through the Christian life. As we work our way through Philippians we will see:

- Christ Our Life (Chapter 1)
- Christ Our Mind (Chapter 2)
- Christ Our Goal (Chapter 3)
- Christ Our Strength (Chapter 4)

**If you have the time today read through Philippians again.**

The more you read it the more understanding you will gain of this book of inner joy.

**Still eager to learn more? Make a list, with scripture reference, of everything this letter tells us about these. (I've given you an example)**

**PAUL**

1:1 - an apostle

**RECIPIENT**

1:1 - saints in Christ Jesus.