

Philippians

Lesson 1

Acts 16:6-40

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Lesson 1

Acts: 16:6-40

Establishing the Philippian Church

During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him,
“Come over to Macedonia and help us.” *Acts 16:9*

Prayers

Introduction

The letter to the Philippian Church is from the Apostles Paul and Timothy. It was written while Paul was in prison in Rome around 60AD. It is one of several letters Paul wrote from prison, including Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon. Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians all have similar structures and themes. As Peter said, “He [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters” (2 Peter 3:16). Who knew Peter had a sense of humor? Above all, Philippians is a letter of profound thanks to a beloved congregation concerned for Paul. They supported him with prayers and financial gifts from the “earliest days of their acquaintance with the gospel.”

Paul writes to the Philippians with joy, encouraging their unity, their walk with Christ, and exalting the lordship of Christ. He envisions them shining like stars, giving the word of life to a world without hope. Our Lord entrusts us with the same message of God’s love and salvation through Jesus Christ to the world today.

Philippi was a leading Roman colony in Macedonia, Greece, making it the first church established in Europe. The Philippian Church was founded along a small river on the outskirts of town where Paul was looking for a place to pray and met with a small group of women. One of them, Lydia, believed the gospel and was baptized with her entire household. Today, a small church named the Holy Baptistry of Saint Lydia of Philippi commemorates the site of the founding of the Philippian Church. It is still a quiet, lovely spot for prayer.

Read Acts 16:6-15 Establishing the Philippian Church

Ac 16:6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

Ac 16:7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia [Northern Turkey], but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.

Ac 16:8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

Ac 16:9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

Ac 16:10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Ac 16:11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis.

Ac 16:12 From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

Ac 16:13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

Ac 16:14 One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

Ac 16:15 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us

1. What events lead Paul to Philippi?

Paul was prevented from entering Bithynia.

Paul was given a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him to come to help them.

Paul reasoned God was calling him to go to Macedonia.

2. Have you ever experienced being led by God by encountering closed doors?

It seems like every major direction in my life has resulted from closed doors, only to find something better waiting down the road. This is true professionally, relationally, and even with my health. I always thought I would be an elementary school teacher when I was young. I graduated with a teaching degree, enjoyed student teaching fifth and sixth graders, and then got a job teaching third grade – what a disaster! It was abundantly clear that I was not made to teach young children. I sold sporting goods for a year before deciding to go back to school and study mathematics and science. Six years later, I had several degrees in geology and began a career with Shell – a better fit with my God-given talents. Now, I am always grateful for God's direction in those early days when I may not have been seeking it.

3. Luke, the author of Acts, refers to the Spirit of Jesus in verse 16:7. What is the difference between the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of God? Refer to the following verses:

Ro 8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

1Co 12:3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

There is no difference. The Holy Spirit is also referred to as the Spirit of Jesus and the Spirit of God.

4. How long was Paul's missionary journey to Philippi (Acts 16:12)?

A few days.

5. Who was the first to hear the gospel in Europe?

A group of women.

6. What are some things you can conclude about Lydia?

Lydia was probably wealthy – a dealer of purple cloth, which was expensive because it was difficult to make and not common.

She is described as a worshiper of God but not baptized. That implies she may have been Jewish (who worshiped God but did not know about Christ) or a Gentile who God had been guiding to faith in Christ.

She was a person of influence over her household, and they were all led to faith and were baptized. She was welcoming and had a gift for hospitality. I think we all would have liked Lydia!

7. What does Paul's 125-mile voyage to Philippi teach about how God values the lost?

Mt 15:21 Leaving that place [Galilee], Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon [about 65 miles away].

Mt 15:22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."

Mt 15:23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

Mt 15:24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

Mt 15:25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

Mt 15:26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

Mt 15:27 "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

Mt 15:28 Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Lk 15:3 Then Jesus told them [Pharisees and teachers of the law] this parable:

Lk 15:4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?

Lk 15:5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders

Lk 15:6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'

Lk 15:7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Paul's 125-mile voyage to Philippi led to the conversion of one household – and all heaven rejoiced! We should not be so quick to judge the success of our outreach based on numbers.

Read Acts 16:16-24, Paul and Silas in Prison

Ac 16:16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.

Ac 16:17 This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."

Ac 16:18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

Ac 16:19 When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

Ac 16:20 They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar

Ac 16:21 by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”

Ac 16:22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.

Ac 16:23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.

Ac 16:24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

8. When you think it's going so well, the hammer falls! When have you encountered surprisingly bad consequences after a good action?

Answers will vary

9. The announcement of the slave girl, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved,” sounds like a good and truthful announcement. What issue distressed Paul and Silas? Refer to some other scriptures about fortune telling (divination).
 - a. Lev 19:26 Do not practice divination or sorcery.
 - b. 1Sa 28:9 But the woman [the Witch of Endor] said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?”
1Sa 28:10 Saul swore to her by the LORD, “As surely as the LORD lives, you will not be punished for this.”
1Sa 28:11 Then the woman asked, “Whom shall I bring up [from the dead] for you?”
“Bring up Samuel,” he said.
1Sa 28:12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!”
 - c. Mk 1:23 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out,
Mk 1:24 “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”
Mk 1:25 “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!”

The Bible acknowledges the power of the occult and strictly forbids believers to have any association with it since its power is demonic and from Satan. Therefore, Paul and Silas drove out the demonic spirit as Jesus did during his ministry. Throughout the Old Testament, divination is associated with witchcraft, sorcery, mediums, spiritualists who consult the dead, idolatry, and all manner of evil. All are strictly forbidden.

Read Acts 16:25-40 The Miraculous Escape

Ac 16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Ac 16:26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.

Ac 16:27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

Ac 16:28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

Ac 16:29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.

Ac 16:30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Ac 16:31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved —you and your household."

Ac 16:32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

Ac 16:33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Ac 16:34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

Ac 16:35 When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men."

Ac 16:36 The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace."

Ac 16:37 But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

Ac 16:38 The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed.

Ac 16:39 They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city.

Ac 16:40 After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left.

10. Spending the night beaten and bleeding in prison sounds grim, but Paul and Silas sang for the other prisoners! How do you pass the time during a difficult situation?

Good company, music, prayers, and inspirational reading makes difficult circumstances pass by.

11. What lesson can we learn about joy from Paul and Silas' example?

Paul and Silas found joy in being able to share the gospel of Christ with others. Their focus on Christ was so singular that external circumstances were unimportant.

12. Verses 16:30-31 are probably the most succinct statement of how to be saved found in the Bible. What actions accompanied this statement of salvation?

Believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized!

13. How do you see God's complete control during Paul and Silas' missionary journey to Philippi?

Paul's trip to Philippi began with a vision from God telling him to go. Once Paul was in Philippi, he met a group of women who believed the gospel. The only one we know of by name is Lydia. Because of her wealth, she probably supported Paul throughout his ministry and gave the Philippian church its reputation for generosity.

Even though Paul and Silas were beaten, flogged, and imprisoned for casting out a demon, they used the opportunity to praise God and witness to the prisoners. The prison jailer and his entire household were saved and baptized after God broke open the prison doors by an earthquake. Paul and Silas were released and met with Lydia and the new members of the Philippian church.

Closing Prayer