

Introduction To Philippians

Paul's second journey is recorded in Acts 15-18. He came to Troas and was perplexed because the Spirit had forbidden him to preach in areas behind him. When he arrived in Troas an ocean lay before his forward path. What was he to do? Where was he to go? That was soon decided for by night a man in a vision stood, beckoning, saying, "*Come over into Macedonia and help us*" (Acts 16:9). From this Paul and his company concluded God wished that they preach the gospel in Macedonia.

It is here that the narrative commences with the "we" passages, indicating that the writer of the history was also writing of "first hand" experiences. Paul and Silas had begun the journey together but had picked up Timothy at Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:3). With the advent of the "we" passages, it is evident that a fourth person is now in their company: Luke. The weather and the sea both smiled on them as they passed from Troas to Macedonia for the journey was made in record time in that day.

The principal city of Macedonia was Philippi, a Roman colony. Paul did not delay. On the Sabbath he sought out and found a place of prayer where certain women were gathered. He spoke with them and one of those who heard him was Lydia "*whose heart the Lord opened to give attention to the things which were spoken by Paul*" (Acts 16:14). She was a woman of hospitality and she insisted that if Paul had judged her to be faithful to the Lord, they must abide with her while they preached in the city. And so they do. From this humble beginning began the Philippian church. It is not certain how long Paul remained in Philippi. However long it was, he kept busy preaching the word. His departure came because he cast an unclean spirit from a young girl who had proven to have brought much gain to her masters. When they saw "*that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market place unto the rulers,*" charging them with troubling the city. As a consequence, Paul and Silas were cast into prison. That night an earthquake shook the prison, loosing the bands of all the prisoners and the jailer (supposing the prisoners had fled) was poised to kill himself. Paul kept him from this saying, "*Do thyself no harm. We are all here*" (Acts 16:28). The jailor heard and converted. Next day Paul and Silas left the city for Thessalonica.

When Paul and Silas and perhaps Timothy left the city it is likely Luke remained behind to strengthen the infant church and continue preaching the gospel, for the narrative returned to the "third person." But the poor church had an evangelistic fervor: they aided Paul in preaching at Thessalonica and likely sent help to him also at Corinth (Phil. 4:15-18; 2 Cor. 11:8). They had

forged a close bond with Paul, a bond which remained through the remainder of his life.

With the passing of years, brethren lost touch with Paul but from some source learned he was in prison in Rome and needed their help once more. They responded again and sent a generous gift to him by the hand of a beloved brother named Epaphroditus (Phil. 4:18). Their messenger fell ill in Rome and almost died, but through intercession to God, his life was spared.

This letter is a "thank you" letter for their help and partnership with him as he preached the gospel. It is one of Paul's five prison letters, written from Rome between the years of A.D. 61-63; a letter which emphasizes joy and comfort and is free of any criticism save a mild request from Paul to two sisters to "*be of the same mind in the Lord*" (Eph. 4:2). It continues to encourage Christians today just as it must have the Philippians to whom it originally was sent. It has many wonderful sections in it, to which attention will be given as short essays are written regarding Paul's letter to the Philippians.

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