

Expository Bible Study for Paul's Letter to the Philippians
Lesson #1 • Introduction to the Philippians Epistle
• H A N D O U T •

► Philippi was located in Macedonia in the northern region of Greece. It was a wealthy Roman colony and a “gateway” City, so named because of its strategic location on the Via Egnatia, a major Roman road connecting the East to the West. Because of this, it was also a major trade center, contributing to the City's prosperity and its importance. Philippi was also known for its gold mines and the minting of gold coins for the Roman Empire.

Philippi was designated as the place of choice for retired soldiers because, if they settled there, they were given a grant of land with privileges such as Roman citizenship, along with all the rights of citizenship, immunity from taxes, and military protection.

While the population of Philippi was predominantly Roman and Greek, it did have a small Jewish community but without a synagogue. However, Philippi had numerous shrines and pagan temples. Pan, Baal, and Zeus were among their principal gods. Perhaps most notable was the temple for the worship of Caesar, which Herod the Great built. Though it sounds ridiculous to us, Archaeologists have even unearthed a shrine for “dancing goats.”

► Our study of Philippians really starts in Acts. Between the years 47-48 AD, Paul began his first missionary journey, where he preached and established churches. The journey began and ended in Syrian Antioch, where he ended up staying for about two years. In AD 50 he decided to revisit the churches he had established. He took Silas and Timothy with him. When they got to Troas, Luke joined the team. This will be Paul's Second Missionary journey and a good portion of it will serve as the foundation to our study of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

► **Acts 16:6-10** • 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. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.

So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” 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.

Q: What stands out about the way the LORD is involved in Paul's missionary efforts?

Q: Is there a difference between verse 6 referring to the “Holy Spirit,” verse 7 referring to the “Spirit of Jesus,” and verse 10 referring to “God?”

Q: Since the Lord had commissioned Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, and considering where Paul wanted to preach, why does the LORD's intervention seem a bit strange?

► **Acts 16:13-15** • 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. 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.

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.

Q: Why would Paul go outside the city gate to the river with the expectation of finding a gathering for prayer?

Q: What did Paul find at the prayer gathering at the river?

Q: What are the implications of Lydia being a "dealer in purple cloth" and was from the city of Thyatira?

Q: What was a Gentile woman from Asia Minor doing at a Jewish prayer gathering at the river?

Q: As Paul began to speak and share the Gospel, the scripture says God opened Lydia's heart to the message. What principle do we learn from this?

Q: What was the outcome with Lydia?

Following such a great beginning to the spread of the Gospel in Philippi big trouble was waiting, just around the corner ...

► **Acts 16:16-18** • Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, screaming, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." 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.

Q: What is a "spirit of divination?" Did it have real power, and if yes, what was its source?

Q: If the "spirit" was speaking truth through the slave girl, why did Paul react so negatively?

Q: What is significant about Paul speaking to the demonic spirit that had taken residence within the slave girl?

Money talks louder than Miracles ...

► **Acts 16:19-24** • 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. They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Q: Was it only the loss of money that caused the slave girl's owner to attack Paul and Silas, or was there more to it?

| <u>THE COMPLAINT AGAINST PAUL & SILAS</u> | <u>WHAT THEIR COMPLAINT MEANT:</u> |
|---|------------------------------------|
| "They are Jews" not "us Romans" | |
| "Advocating customs unlawful for Romans" | |
| They're throwing our city into an uproar" | |

Q: Where was Timothy and Luke when Paul & Silas when all of this was going on?

Q: What was unexpected about the Magistrates ordering Paul & Silas stripped & severely flogged?

Q: How did such an unlawful thing happen in a Roman Colony?

Q: Why does the jailer put Paul and Silas into an "inner cell?"

Paul & Silas should resent their situation. Why should they be made to suffer for their faithful zealotry? But instead of resentment, we hear praying and singing. And it is almost Midnight ... God is about to intervene. This is where we will pick up our next lesson.



Next Time • Lesson #2 • Miracle at Midnight

