

Sunday School Lesson

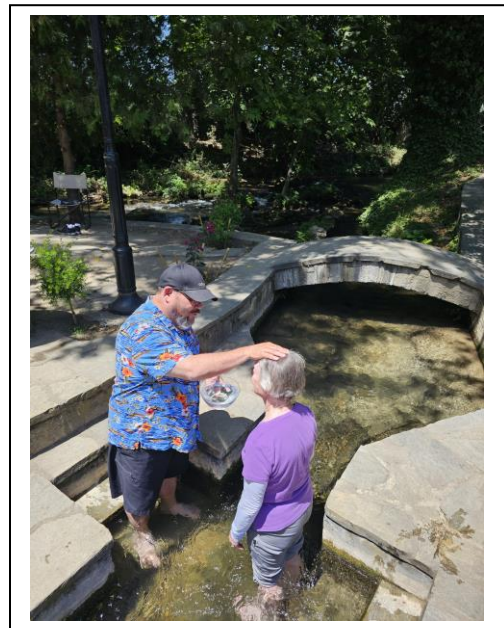
Philippians 1-2: Paul's Circumstances and Exhortations (November 2, 2025)

Background:

Philippi was founded in 356 BC and named for Philip II, king of Macedonia. The village that was previously there was named Krenides ("springs").¹

The letter we're studying was written about 62 AD, we believe from prison in Rome as he was facing execution (1:13). But, how did Paul get there to start with? He was called to Philippi by a dream. Read **Acts 16:9-15**.

Here is Caryl, in purple, being baptized in the same stream, behind Lydia's house.



What else happened here? From Acts 16:16-40:

¹⁶ Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She 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." ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed 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. ¹⁹ When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men

¹ Bruce, Philippians, p. 1.

are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”

²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. ²³ After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴ When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 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 everyone’s chains came loose. 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. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”

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

³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹ They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. 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 household.

³⁵ When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: “Release those men.” ³⁶ The jailer told Paul, “The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.”

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.”

³⁸ The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. ³⁹ They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia’s house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.

From Philippi, Paul and his comrades traveled to Thessalonica. About 5 years later, after his ministry in Ephesus, he “went his way to Macedonia.” Later, after Greece, Paul returned to Macedonia on his last visit to Jerusalem. So, he visited there 3 times.²

² Dunnam, Mastering the New Testament, p. 251.

Introduction:

This is a letter of joy, gratitude, affection and love. No church was so dear to Paul as was Philippi. He felt yoked to this congregation through their partnership in the gospel. Though Timothy was with Paul and included in the salutation, the letter is specifically from Paul (“I thank God...”). Read **Philippians 1:1-11**

- (Timothy was a native of Lystra in Lycaonia, son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father.)
- The word for “servants” is not the same as “slaves.” Paul means “those who are sent,” as was Moses, Joshua, David, etc.
- Some Bible versions describe the letter’s recipients as “holy ones,” some as “saints,” all meaning people set apart for holy purposes.
- Paul frequently stresses his relation to them as “partners in Christ.”

Paul’s Message

Paul is torn between looking forward to death and eternal life with Christ or life and continued work for Christ.

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; - Philippians 1:21-23

Paul’s choice is biased by his affection for Philippi:

²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. – Philippians 1:24-26

Christ should be your model for life:

- Harmony: 2:1- So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
- Humility: 2:3- Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves.
- Care for each other: 2:4- Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

God has honored Jesus

- 2:6- who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself (“kenosis”), taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
- 2:8- And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.
- 2:9- Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Obligations of Christians

- Know that God is working in you.
- No grumbling or questioning
- Hold fast the word of life (the promise of eternal life)

Paul closes this part with promises to send:

- Timothy, who has served Paul very well, because Paul wants him to bring back a status report.
- Epaphroditus, who came from Philippi to bring gifts to Paul, had taken ill. The Philippians were concerned about him and would be anxious to see that he has recovered. (It is easily inferred that Epaphroditus’ return to Philippi was the opportunity for Paul to send this letter by him.) However, the Philippians may think Epaphroditus was a “quitter,” so Paul described him as a “servant,” using the term *leitourgos*, which was used to describe generous and dedicated benefactors or supporters. He should be welcomed home.

Summary:

There are other passages that imply that Paul was not in favor of women in leadership in the church, yet, here Lydia was the first convert, and the initial church was in her house. Euodia and Syntyche were apparently leaders, too.

Christ should be our model for life

- Be of one mind with each other
- No selfishness or conceit
- Humility
- Obedience

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