

Introduction to Philippians

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Well, good morning and thank you again for being here today. Because I am technologically challenged and I'm having some difficulty with this recorder, I have no idea whether this is going to be recorded or not.

So we'll just have to wait and see. But at any rate, we're glad that you're here and getting content live. And this being our introductory session to Paul's letter to the Philippians, it seemed like a fitting time to begin a new study like this, this being the month of March and spring, beginning a lot of new things.

So we'll be beginning a new study today. And even though we are going to undertake the epistle to the Philippians, we will not be in Philippians today, but we will be in Philippi, providing what I think is some very important and necessary background information before we actually undertake the epistle.

So join with me in a word of prayer and we'll get underway. Accept our thanks, Father, for the presence of each one here today, especially for your presence and for the word that you've provided.

We pray for a facility of understanding and appreciating the text and the implications thereof. Thank you for being pleased to make this truth available to us through the revelation that you've given.

[1 : 20] We bless you for it in Christ's name. Amen. In taking the study of Paul's letter to the Philippians, you will, shortly after we get underway in the actual text, appreciate the fact that Philippians is frequently referred to as the epistle of joy.

And indeed it is, because there are numerous joyous expressions in it, revelations that can only exude joy within the heart and mind of the believer.

And I think you'll see those as we move right along. It is a short epistle consisting only of four chapters, but it is absolutely packed with all kinds of wonderful things.

And one of the one of the principal things I'm anticipating undertaking. We'll encounter in the first chapter of Philippians because it has to do with the subject of prayer.

And also, again, surfacing in chapter four. And it will deal also with the afterlife and what happens when we exit these present bodies.

[2 : 28] So we'll be considering a number of really important themes, all of which surface in Ephesians. But last but not least, and I don't want to omit this because it is perhaps the most important of all.

And that is in chapter two, where we find the great declension of our Lord Jesus Christ, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a certain.

So it's the great kenosis passage, the self-emptying of Christ in order to take upon him humanity. And the consequences of that, of course, are just absolutely enormous.

So we'll be considering all of these beautiful themes as we make our way through Philippians. But before we undertake the book, we need to know something about the people and the circumstances of Philippi that caused Paul to write some of the things that he did.

And that will necessitate our going to the book of Acts in chapter 16. And I'm sure you are all familiar with the fact that it is in this chapter that the famous account, the conversion of the Philippian jailer, takes place.

[3 : 40] And it is a wonderful, wonderful chapter. Also, it is recording one of the more dramatic things that took place on Paul's second missionary journey.

So if you've turned to Acts chapter 16, I want you to look at chapter 15 and verse 36.

Because what is transpiring here has to do with an expression made by Paul the Apostle regarding those to whom they had earlier preached the gospel and a desire that Paul had to revisit them and see how they're getting along.

Someone has said that this is the classic passage that justifies the concept of follow-up work. Too many times evangelists go into an area and evangelize and succeed in winning a certain number of converts to Christ.

But then very often these people are seemingly abandoned, just kind of left to dangle out there with little or no follow-up to encourage them in the faith. So this is a verse, verse 36 of chapter 15, that addresses that issue.

[5 : 09] And it is right shortly after following, shortly after their first missionary journey had been complete. The thing that will characterize the second one that we're going to undertake today is the fact that it is by far and away the lengthiest of all of the missionary journeys Paul took.

And in many ways it seems to have been the most strategic and the most fruitful. Because in this second missionary journey, the gospel actually penetrates for the first time into Europe.

Paul had not been there on his first journey. And that is very, very significant. So in verse 36 of chapter 15, we read, And after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaim the word of the Lord and see how they are.

One of the most common things that is characteristic of new converts to the faith of Christianity is, they almost immediately develop a tremendous thirst for information.

They have a huge number of questions. Frequently they are questions that they never even thought of before. Things that didn't even concern them. Things that didn't interest them at all.

[6 : 34] But once one becomes a believer in Jesus Christ, a whole new world of reality opens up to you. And principally it is the spiritual world.

But not only the spiritual world, it is because of the impact that Jesus Christ makes on an individual's life that his actual worldview begins undergoing an alteration.

And in some cases it's very dramatic. It simply means that becoming a believer in Jesus Christ affects the way you not only see yourself, but affects the way you see others, and affects your worldview.

This is, I think, what Paul is talking about when he said, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

You have a new set of eyes. Different ways of looking at things. And different areas of concern and interest that you've never had before. And I think that Paul realizes that, and he's going to go back and address some of these issues.

[7 : 43] Let us return to every city in which we proclaim the word of the Lord and see how they are. And Barnabas was desirous of taking John, called Mark, along with them also.

But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along, who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. We don't know what the circumstances were behind Mark's peeling off.

We don't know why he seemed to have quit or abandoned the project. No doubt he felt justified in his own mind in doing so. But we aren't given details.

The only thing that we can gather from this is apparently Paul felt that Mark was not justified in leaving them and the work. And apparently Paul was pretty put out about it.

So there arose an argument, a disputation. And some, of course, are of the opinion that if two people are saints, they both know and love the Lord, they'll never argue about anything.

[8 : 44] Well, we know that's not true. We know that Christians are capable of severe disagreements because each one sees reality with their own perspective. And you don't always see eye to eye with another person, despite the fact that you may love them, truly, even as in the case sometimes of husbands and wives who love each other dearly but do not always agree on everything.

So here there is a disagreement between two men of God, Paul and Barnabas. And the disagreement was so unresolved that they decided to part company over it.

They just felt that they could no longer work together, so they decided to work separately. And we read in verse 39, there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

But Paul chose Silas and departed, being committed by the brethren to the grace of God, and he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Now we look at this from a human standpoint only. It's the only one we've got. And we say that it's terribly unfortunate that they had to part company here, but sometimes it doesn't always turn out that way because the observation has been made that even though these fellows had sharp disagreement and it caused them to split up, it did have a positive effect in that their splitting up resulted in two missionary teams, not just one, and they went in different directions.

[10 : 20] So all is not lost. And if you'll take a look at your map of Paul's second missionary journey, we will see that they actually are going to begin in Antioch of Syria.

And that's about halfway up your map. If you'll look at the right-hand side, you're in Syria. This is ancient Antioch. The name got its name from Antiochus, who was a Grecian king several years earlier.

And it is not to be confused with the other Antioch. If you'll look over at the middle of Asia Minor there, if you'll look straight up from Pamphylia, Lystra, and Derbe, you see another Antioch.

That's called Antioch of Pisidia. We are talking about Antioch of Syria. And there are two different Antiochs. Both derive their name from the same emperor, the same Grecian king.

But this Antioch of Syria is going to be distinguished as the original Christian headquarters for the gospel.

[11 : 30] It is from this Antioch that all of Paul's missionary journeys will be launched. It is at Antioch, contrary to what one might think, not Jerusalem, but Antioch, that will become the earliest center of Christianity.

In fact, we are told, I think it's in Acts 21, but don't quote me on that, where Christians, where believers are first called Christians in Antioch.

And it is this Antioch of Syria. Of course, the Syria is hotly in contest today. It's very much in the news because Bashar Assad, who is the dictator of Syria, is in hot pursuit of the rebel faction trying to virtually eliminate them.

And they, of course, are trying to overthrow his regime. And it is headquartered in Damascus, which is the capital of Syria.

We see it very much in the news today. It is one more Arab nation that is in disarray and in great turmoil because of the desire of the people for revolution to overthrow the regime.

[12 : 49] So we're talking about modern-day Syria, only an ancient town by the name of Antioch. And you'll see as you follow the map how that they immediately go north a little bit up into Cilicia and then over to Tarsus.

No doubt, Paul is stopping there, probably renewing some acquaintances because he originally came from Tarsus. This is his hometown. And then he moves over further to the west to Derbe and Lystra.

Of course, it is here that he will suffer stoning and will have been left for dead. And then on up to the other Antioch, Antioch of Pisidia, then over to Mysia, further west.

And we see when, as you note the map, all of the dark area, of course, is water. The white area is land. And it is soon that they will arrive at Troas.

We will see a significant thing take place at Troas. Troas is the same as Troy, the city of Troy.

[14 : 05] We're perhaps more familiar with it being called Troy, but in the Bible it's also called Troas. And one of the most important things about Troy or Troas is that is the area from which Dr. Luke hailed.

And we will see the language change in the book of Acts from the pronoun they, they, they to we, we, we, we.

Indicating that it is at this point in time that Dr. Luke, who was writing previously about they and them, changes the use of the pronoun to we and us.

Indicating that he is now part of the group. He is traveling with them. And we know that Paul will find his services invaluable as the beloved physician ministers to him.

So let's get back to our text now. And in, in Acts chapter 16 as it opens, you can follow this on the map if you wish. And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra and behold a certain disciple was there named Timothy.

[15 : 17] And yes, this is the same Timothy to whom Paul will later write two of his personal epistles, 1st and 2nd Timothy. He is the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer.

But his father was a Greek. And he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man, Timothy, to go with him.

No doubt there were those who came to Paul insisting that he meet this young man by the name of Timothy. I can just see someone now talking to Paul.

You've got to meet this kid. He is really sharp. I mean, you could teach him a lot. He has a wonderful spiritual attitude about him. He's very teachable.

He would be valuable to you. And the more Paul hears about him, perhaps after meeting him, he decides this young man would really be an asset. I'd like to have him on board. He invites him to join the team.

[16 : 22] And we read that he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews. Now, there are those who would seriously fault the Apostle Paul for circumcising Timothy.

And they would actually accuse him of compromising his convictions. Because, after all, it is this same man who says, for circumcision avails nothing, neither uncircumcision.

But faith is all that matters. And now, he is having Timothy circumcised. Why would he do that? Any questions?

Any ideas why he would do that? The text tells us, doesn't it? Because of the Jews. What are the Jews very, very big on? Something very, very small.

Circumcision. It was an absolute necessity if you were a Jew. If you wanted to get anywhere with the Jew by way of teaching, content, influence, etc., and you were not circumcised, forget it.

[17 : 30] You couldn't possibly have anything important to say. And they referred to these people as dogs, as the uncircumcised, as foreskins, and as other uncomplimentary things.

So, Paul knew that if Timothy was going to have any credibility with the Jews, to whom Paul would also be ministering often, in addition to Gentiles, he would have to be circumcised.

Otherwise, they would not take him seriously. So, I do not see this as being an item of compromise on Paul's part at all. Remember the expression that he gave when he wrote to the Corinthians.

He says, to the Jew, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jew. And to the Gentiles as a Gentile, that I might gain the Gentiles. I become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

It doesn't mean that Paul would go and do whatever was required in order to minister to whomever, but it was this. He refused to put any unnecessary impediments in his way when it came to reaching people with the gospel.

[18 : 41] Now, you will note, and this is brought out in Galatians chapter 2, that Titus, Titus comes to the fore when Paul goes to Galatia and they have the great controversy over fellowshiping with Gentiles.

Remember when he called Peter on the carpet and withstood him face to face because he was to be blamed? Titus was not circumcised, and there were those who insisted that he should be and Paul put his foot down and said no.

Why did he do that? Why did he agree to the circumcision of Timothy but refused circumcision for Titus? And the answer is this.

Titus was a full-fledged Gentile. His mother was a Gentile. His father was a Gentile. Now, we would think, well, that doesn't make that much difference, but oh, yes, it did.

In that economy and in that culture, it made a great deal of difference because they end up having an entire conference at Jerusalem in Acts 15 over this subject of whether those who were Gentiles who put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, whether they had to be circumcised.

[20 : 07] And Paul said, to whom we gave space, no, not for an hour that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. So he put his foot down there and he says, no, you are not going to impose circumcision upon Gentiles.

However, Timothy was considered a Jew. And as you read the text, he is the son of a Jewish woman.

In the Jewish economy, what is it that determines Jewishness? It is not paternity. And the reason it is not paternity is because there can always be a misunderstanding or an error regarding paternity.

We all know that there are people who have one-night stands, etc. Sometimes the father of the child is not the one everyone thinks is the father of the child.

But it's usually pretty certain as to who the mother is, isn't it? So it is the mother of the child that determines Jewishness, and she was Jewish, even though the father was not.

[21 : 20] And that was important. So, it was a matter of expedience and practicality that he be circumcised, and I don't know exactly how old Timothy was.

Possibly, if I were to just take a guess, and this is just a Wiseman opinion, it could be as wrong as everything, but if I were to just take a guess, I'd say he's probably in his early 20s. And when Paul took him aside and said, you know what, it would probably be a really good idea if you were circumcised.

I can just almost envision the look on Timothy's face. Paul, do we have to do this?

Is this really necessary? But at any rate, he apparently was not opposing it, went along with it, and I'm sure he wasn't excited about it.

And then in verse 4, I assume this is after the healing of young Timothy, they were passing through the cities and were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem for them to observe.

[22 : 34] So the churches were being strengthened in the faith and were increasing in number daily. And they passed through the frigid and Galatian region, you can see that on your map there, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

This is to speak the word in Asia Minor, which is exactly where they were located at the time. You see the little designation there that says Asia, that of course is talking about Asia Minor, and all that we are looking at here, Asia, Ephesus, Phrygia, Antioch, Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Mysia, all of this, this is modern day Turkey.

This is modern day Turkey, Asia Minor that we are looking at. And of course, Asia Major is way to the east of Asia Minor.

That, of course, encompasses China, and Russia, and Japan, and other nations of the Far East. So we're talking about the Mid-East.

And the fact that it is called Asia sometimes is a little bit misleading. And if you want for clarification's sake, you could just write minor under Asia, because it actually is Asia Minor.

[23 : 50] And we are told that when they arrived there, they were forbidden to preach the gospel there. And I take it that this means only one thing, that they were passing through.

And that the Spirit of God would not permit them to stop there in Asia Minor and proclaim the gospel there, which is precisely what they had intended to do.

I do not know how the Spirit of God forbade them to do that. We are not given any details as to how they were prevented. But you can understand the mind and heart of the apostle Paul.

Here is a man who was wont to preach the gospel wherever he was, whenever he was, to whomever would constitute an audience. And yet, they tried to go into Bithynia, and you do not see Bithynia on the map here.

Unfortunately, it isn't here. But you see, Bithynia is actually a region in Bithynia. Bithynia is the larger geographical locale, and Bithynia is a part of Bithynia there, even though it isn't on the map.

[25 : 02] And as they attempted, were trying to go into Bithynia, the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them. So we've got two forbiddings, one in verse 6 and one in verse 7.

they could not remain in Asia Minor and preach there, and they wanted to go north then into Mysia and Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them.

Exactly how, as I said earlier, how he prevented them or dissuaded them from doing that, we're not told. But at least they got the message that they were not to proclaim the word.

And you know, with the plan and program of God, he not only has a purpose that he wants to accomplish, but he has circumstances under which he wants to accomplish it.

And God not only takes into consideration what he wants to do, but he also takes into consideration when he wants to do it.

[26 : 05] And sometimes when God does something is as important as what God does, because there are always implications and consequences even of divine action. And all I can say is the Spirit of God wanted the gospel to penetrate Europe, and in what he considered a timely fashion.

So, it is no, you are not going to stop and proclaim the gospel here. I want it over there. Now, later, on other occasions, the gospel will be preached here, but not now.

So, let's read on, if we may. In verse 9, a very famous account, a vision appeared to Paul in the night, a certain man of Macedonia.

Macedonia is northern Greece. a man from Macedonia was standing and appealing to him and saying, come over to Macedonia and help us.

And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

[27 : 28] I can just imagine the uncertainty, the perplexity that the apostle Paul and Timothy and Silas must have had when they wanted to proclaim the gospel where they were, and yet they were forbidden to do so, and it seemed so counterproductive because this is the very reason we're on the road, this is why we're taking this missionary journey.

the Spirit of God has thrust us forth and the brethren have laid hands upon us and committed us to this mission, and here we are, and now God says, no, you're not going to preach the gospel here.

So, have you ever, have you ever attempted to do something that you considered to be obviously in God's will, with what you believed was a good sincere motive and something you really wanted to do, and you were unable, and you may have prayed about it, and there's no opening and no opportunity, and it just seems like there's a barrier there, a wall there.

Well, I can attest to this a number of times, and sometimes the problem isn't the what, it's the when. Sometimes the timing is a very strategic thing, and I think that was the case here.

So, we need to be aware of the fact that sometimes God says yes, and sometimes he says no, and sometimes he says not yet, later, and his way, of course, is always the best.

[29 : 09] So, after this vision, and may I just inject something here too, I am personally very skeptical about people with visions today.

I am not saying it cannot happen, I am not saying that it does not happen, I am saying that the principle way that God communicates his will to people today is through his word, not through visions, miracles, etc.

I am not discounting those, I am not saying that God cannot use those, God can do anything he wants in any dispensation he wants to do it. He can heal anybody of anything he wants at any time he wants to do it.

He can provide visions and dreams to give direction to people any time he wants to do it. I am simply saying that in the mean, in the mean, the principle way God makes his will known to us today is through the word that he has inspired.

And we ought to be very, very cautious about following anything else that purports to be the will of God, especially if we find it in contradiction to a principle of scripture.

[30 : 28] So, this vision was clearly a direction to them. We saw how a vision was clear direction to Peter in Acts chapter 10 and the incident with Cornelius.

And these kind of biblical accounts, by the way, give some justification to people today who think they see visions. And sometimes people just have a very active imagination, or sometimes they have weird dreams depending on what they ate before they went to bed, and they try to attach some kind of divine significance to it.

And all I'm saying is, don't launch out on things like that. You need something more sure and certain from the scriptures themselves. And if God wants to instruct or inform somebody through a dream or a vision, I can assure you that he can easily confirm it with something he has already written in his word.

So, he is going to go to Macedonia, that is, crossing this small strait of water here that will lead to Europe, and putting out to sea from Troas, we, and you'll notice the we here in verse 11, the we, and when you're in chapter 15 and verse 33, it is after they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who sent them out, but now it is we, and it is, I believe, at Troas, which traditionally is where Dr. Luke is from, Troy, that he came on board and joined them there at Troas.

So, Luke, writing this description from now on, is saying us in verse 10, and then we in verse 11, and it will be in the plural from here on through the book of Acts, because Luke is with them all the time.

[32 : 35] They came to Neapolis, set a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis, and that, of course, is the seaport town right on the coast.

Philippi is not on the coast, it is inland some, and as you look at your map, you can see that, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia.

In other words, it is a strategic city, one of the most important cities in Macedonia, and we are told that it is a Roman colony. That is very, very important.

Nothing in the word of God is injected just to fill up space. Every word has meaning and significance, and it seems to be rather inconsequential and just petty details, minutious stuff, that it mentions that Philippi is a Roman colony.

So who cares? That is ancient history. That does not have anything to do with anything. You would be surprised how connected it is, though. We will see that in a moment. There are no extraneous details in scripture.

[33 : 47] The fact that it is a Roman colony is important, and what that meant was this. Rome ruled the world. The governmental, political, and military tentacles of Rome were spread over the entire Mediterranean world.

It was Rome who brought modern warfare on the scene. It was Rome who brought modern transportation, relatively speaking, on the scene, with hard paved roads all over the Roman Empire, which were unheard of at the time.

And Roman law, of course, was very famous, from which we take many of our legal terms even today. So, when a city was designated as a Roman colony, it was a great honor to be bestowed upon that city.

It meant that you enjoyed a most favored city status. It meant that the benefits that accrue to the citizens of Rome were extended to any city that might be a Roman colony.

That meant you were eligible for a lot of perks, a lot of benefits, a lot of prestige, a lot of recognition, a lot of favors, and if the emperor ever had crumbs to dispose upon his countrymen, he would always spend them first upon Roman colonies.

[35 : 14] They were considered the areas that were most loyal to Rome, therefore, they were most rewarded by Rome. These were in Rome's pocket, and if you were a Roman colony, you were very well set.

You were guaranteed the protection of Rome in case an enemy came against you. Rome would come to your defense. It was a beautiful thing and a very important thing to be a Roman colony.

Keep that in mind. It's important. And we were staying in this city for some days. And on the Sabbath day, we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer.

Why would they suppose that? By the riverside. And we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

Why? Where were the men? It's very specific here what the text says, that we began speaking to the women.

[36 : 29] Didn't they have anything to say to the men? I don't think there were any men there. Why wouldn't there be men there? They are going to a Jewish gathering.

But there's no men. Now, Jewish law stipulated that in order to form a synagogue, and a synagogue was simply a place of Jewish gathering, in order to form a synagogue, you had to have a minion.

That's M-I-N-Y-A-N. A minion. A minion simply meant that you have ten male adult Jews.

That was a minion. And if you had a minion, you could form a synagogue. But this isn't a synagogue. This is a place by the riverside, where people are gathering for prayer, and for some kind of worship.

And the reason they were there, I think, by the river, is because in the Jewish context, there were requirements for oblations, washings.

[37 : 45] Hebrews 6 refers to this. Sometimes the word is translated baptisms, and it becomes very confusing because of that.

Because there are multiple washings. The Jews had to wash, cleanse themselves before engaging in any spiritual worship or prayers or whatever. And of course you needed the proximity of water to do that, and that's one of the reasons that they were there by the riverside.

But the fact that there were no men there, and that a lady by the name of Lydia surfaces as a principal player, I think is very significant. And when you ask yourself the question, as I always must when I read the scriptures, and by the way, one of the most profitable things I have ever found in Bible study, is to constantly ask questions of the text.

I am not questioning the text as to its authority or accuracy. I accept that wholly. But I am asking questions about the text.

Every cub reporter, when they are assigned, whether it's print journalism or whether it's electronic journalism or what, every cub reporter is always taught, most important thing that you need to know about reporting the news or conducting an interview are all of the who, what, when, why, and where, and all the rest of them.

[39 : 12] Those are the important questions. So, when I read a passage like this, it says, they were speaking to the women, and apparently there are no men there, and there's a certain woman named Lydia in verse 14.

And as you read on, and it isn't immediate, it isn't in the immediate context that this is discovered, but if you continue reading far enough, you will discover that everything in the Word of God is connected to everything in the Word of God, and what is seemingly mentioned in just passing reference, with no details or explanation, often has an explanation someplace else that, coupled with it, begins to make sense.

And with that, I would have you come over to Acts chapter 18. Acts chapter 18, and verse 1, and bear in mind that we're still dealing with the same time frame, and that's important too, because if this were many years removed, my conclusion might be misleading, but we are still on the second journey of Paul's evangelistic tour, and we read in chapter 18, verse 1, after these things, he left Athens, and went to Corinth, and he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla.

Oh, why did they come from Italy? Because Claudius, who was he? Claudius was the emperor of Rome at the time. Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.

Jews under Claudius at this time became persona non grata. All Jews must leave Rome. This was nothing more than one more incident of the ancient persecution and discrimination against the Jews.

[41 : 18] if ever a government needed a scapegoat to blame for whatever their ills were, they often blamed them on the Jews, just like Adolf Hitler did in World War II. Nothing has changed.

But what does commanding all of the Jews to leave Rome have to do with Philippi? A lot.

Why? Because Philippi was what? A Roman colony. And when you are a Roman colony, you follow suit with whatever Papa Rome does, you do.

Especially if you want to stay in Rome's good graces, you follow after them. So, if Claudius says, all the Jews have to leave Rome, guess what? All the Jews have to leave Philippi.

This is a Roman colony. If you're not welcome in Rome, you're not welcome in Philippi either. So, all the Jews had to leave. But here's another issue. We still have Jewish women.

[42 : 25] And Lydia is going to be one of them. Well, when you consider the view the ancient world had of femininity, you can understand this.

Women were not considered full-fledged citizens, neither under much of the Jews, even though the Scripture does not assign them that, culture did.

And very often with the Greeks and with the Romans, women were considered an inferior status. They had virtually no clout, no rights.

The only consideration they were given was the consideration that males graciously wanted to extend to them. So, women were not considered a threat.

They were not considered major players. They were not considered as any kind of threat to the empire. And when they commanded all the Jews to leave Rome, it was automatically understood.

[43 : 31] This means male Jews. This means those who could pose a potential threat to Rome. And I suspected it would have been the same in Philippi. So, what does that do? Well, that leaves a lot of Jewish women behind.

Of course, when the men were forced to leave Rome, no doubt those who had wives and female children took them with them. But what about women who were single?

or unattached, women who did not have a male to whom they were anchored, many of them were allowed to stay because they were considered nobodies anyway.

I suspect that was the status of this gal, Lydia. So, let's come back to our chapter, Acts 16. And we see that they had begun speaking to the women who had assembled a certain woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics.

I don't want to spend much time with these purple fabrics except to say that this was high end, exclusive type material.

[44 : 41] these purple fabrics consisted of material that was designed for the very wealthy, the well-to-do.

She obviously had some kind of a corner on this market where she serviced the up-and-outer clientele, if you will, the people who were the upper crust of society who could afford this kind of thing.

and we are told that she was a worshiper of God. I think this simply means she was a Jewish woman. She was listening, and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

Well, a great deal of time could be spent here too, and I'm not going to belabor the point except to say that this is one passage from which our Calvinist friends derive their theology, and they are of the opinion that the reason that Lydia believed the gospel was because God enabled her to believe by opening her heart, that if God opens your heart, you can believe.

If God chooses not to open your heart, you are not going to believe no matter what. And this, of course, ties in with the doctrine of unconditional election, which I embarrassedly admit I once proclaimed as gospel fact and really believed it, largely because I had such great respect for men who have gone before me who believe the same thing.

[46 : 22] And if I might just drop a couple of names, John Calvin would be one and St. Augustine would be another, and they are both considerable heavyweights, and I have to this day enormous respect for both of those men.

They both have intellects that could buy and sell mine with change left over. But I just do not see this as being a requirement in order for God to be sovereign.

And I think that God opens people's hearts with the word that is proclaimed. It is always, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

And that which opened Lydia's heart was the word of God that she heard proclaimed, because God always uses his word to open human hearts, and I think that's what happened here.

And as a result, she responded to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay, and she prevailed upon us.

[47 : 33] And if I may just inject a couple of thoughts here regarding the baptism, and I must hasten on, I think it is a perfectly logical thing for Paul to do, because we are remaining in a period of transition that is encompassing several years, from the moving away of the gospel of the kingdom, to the moving into the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul functioned and labored under both dispensations. And the baptism that is performed here upon Lydia is, of course, by virtually all of our friends who insist on water baptism, they see this as what is commonly referred to as Christian baptism.

I don't think it was that at all, and it isn't called that. There's no question that it is baptism. I think there's no question that it is water baptism, but it is nothing more, in my estimation, than a logical, understandable continuation of the baptism of John.

This is the same baptism with which the disciples were baptized in Acts chapter 2, with the repentant be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What was that? That was John's baptism. That was the only baptism anybody knew. It has since been pronounced Christian baptism, but the scriptures do not call it that.

[49 : 11] They call it baptism, and it was the baptism of Jewish people by Jews. It was a continuation of John's baptism. this was the same baptism that this crowd had earlier refused when John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing.

So we find that baptism continued right on into the book of Acts as just a necessary part of that which John was doing, and it was under those circumstances very logical.

So we read, and I intended to get to the Philippian jailer, but we're not making much progress. And in verse 16, it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave girl, having a spirit of divination, met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, These men are bondservants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation. This is a girl who was indwelt by an gastramuthos demon.

This is a demon, a spirit being, indwelling the body of a human being, employing the vocal cords and voice of the human being to speak its message.

[50 : 32] It is sometimes referred to as an unclean spirit. And in this case, it was just a spirit that indwelt. And this poor girl is victim to this demonic spirit that is indwelling her.

And she continued doing this many days. Obviously, she created a real scene and made a real nuisance of herself. And we read that Paul was greatly annoyed.

He was upset. He was concerned. No doubt, this girl was offering some kind of an obstacle or impediment to what they were doing in the proclamation of the gospel. And Paul turned and said to the spirit, notice, he doesn't say to the girl, the girl is just a victim.

He says to the spirit that is indwelling the girl, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out at that very moment.

I have far more questions about demon possession than I have answers. I do not deny that it exists today.

[51 : 45] I'm sure it probably does, especially in certain venues. I do not know that I have ever seen a bona fide case of demon possession, but I suspect that they are around.

I'm sure it would be a very unpleasant and scary thing to have to deal with, because any time you're dealing with darksome powers like this, it is a very powerful and a very scary thing.

And in verse 19, her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone. This gal obviously was a meal ticket for these guys. They profited from her.

They made money from her. They used her. And when they saw that their profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities.

Now, these are pagan people, and you may be sure that the authorities are pagan as well. So, they're going to be sympathetic to the charges made by these handlers of this poor girl.

[52 : 51] And they brought them to the chief magistrates, and they said, notice the charge. They don't level the real charge. They don't say, these guys are doing away with our profit.

No, no, they don't say anything like that. They say something that is much more acceptable. They say, these men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews.

Okay, now wait a minute. Jews have been kicked out of Rome. If Jews have been kicked out of Philippi, now we've got a few more Jews who have just come into town, and guess what?

They're not welcome either. They're on dangerous ground. They are automatically going to be looked upon negatively just because they're Jews. And the Jews have already been booted out of town.

Now these guys have just come into town being Jews and are proclaiming customs, which it is not lawful for us to accept or observe, being Romans.

[53 : 59] Make a big deal out of that. This is flag waving. They're waving the Roman flag and they're saying, this is an issue of patriotism. We are loyal to Rome. These men are Jews.

They're upsetting everything. And the crowd rose up together against them. This is public sentiment. They've got a common enemy. They are Jews. And the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.

Why? Because they're Jews. Because accusation has been made against them. There's no trial, no jury, no official charges, no official verdict.

This is just a legalized kind of mob rule. When they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw him into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely.

and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

[55 : 08] Now, I want you to get a picture of this. They are not only in prison, they are in a prison in the prison. We would call this maximum security.

and they are not only in a prison within a prison, but they are in the stocks, hands and feet confined to the stocks.

And you've seen pictures of these where you hold your hands out and they're handcuffed before you and your feet are out and you're sitting on a bench and you sit there, you can't move your feet, you can't move your hands, you can't even scratch your nose.

Now, that, is security. And that is what they were subjected to, having commanded the guard, the jailer, to guard them securely.

One of the problems that often was associated with guarding prisoners in this day was the fact that the prisoner might be a person of some means or he might have friends who were of some means and they would buy off the guard.

[56 : 23] He would bribe the guard and the guard would allow them to escape and then he would plead his innocence that he couldn't help it, he was overpowered or whatever and the prisoner escaped.

Well, Rome had a ready answer for that and that is this. If you were assigned under Roman authority to guard a prisoner and the prisoner escaped, then you as the guard served whatever sentence had been imposed upon the one who escaped.

So you're going to take their place. And if they were scheduled for execution, you would be executed in their place.

Can you not see how that did away with bribery? No guard is going to take a bribery. You're not going to buy anybody off because he knows that he would be putting himself in great peril.

And apparently that's the kind of scene that we have here. He's not taking any chances. Having received such a command, this is an extraordinary command. He says, I'm not taking any chances with these guys because I know what the consequences are.

[57 : 38] Threw them into the inner prison, fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God.

And the prisoners were listening to them. I suspect it's because the prisoners didn't have any choice. They probably were within earshot and they had to listen to them. But the prisoners, what do you suppose was going through their mind?

Here they are singing praises and hymns to God. These prisoners, it would seem to me, would almost have to conclude one of two things. Either these guys are absolutely nuts and they're just out of their mind, or they know something that we don't know.

What could that be? Well, we know they knew something. The prisoners were listening and suddenly there came a great earthquake.

Do you know that to this day, this particular geography is still very susceptible to earthquakes and it's not terribly newsworthy when they have one because they've had so many over the years.

[58 : 55] So now there is a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

I suspect that this was just a result of this structure, this building. We're not given a description of what the construction was like or anything, but with the ground quaking and shaking under it, it no doubt just threw this whole structure into a structural tizzy, no doubt angling doorways and things and uprooting and turning and all kinds of manipulation and opening and everything as the ground quaking under a structure would be wont to do.

And that's exactly what is experienced here. And the doors of this place fly open and the chains were unfastened. I suspect that that which they were chained to was just part of the upheaval that took place and things were broken, snapped, overturned, upturned, etc.

It must have been a very chaotic thing. I'm sure everybody was yelling, screaming and everything. Here's these prisoners down there locked in these cells, all figured that they're going to die like rats and they're all going to succumb in this.

And we are told that everyone's chains were unfastened and when the jailer had been roused out of sleep and had seen the prison doors opened, his only conclusion was a logical one and that is this.

[60 : 31] Hey, everybody took off. Everybody's run. Everybody's escaped. What does that mean to me? I'm toast. I'm dead. They're going to execute me.

Well, I'm not going to wait around for that. I'm not going to give them the chance to put me to death their way. I'm going to put myself to death my way. And he was prepared to commit suicide right on the spot and you are aware of what happened and what transpires after that.

And that's where we'll have to leave it for now. For time's sake, but I'd like to entertain any questions or comments that you have. Mike? Back earlier in the journey he was stoned. Do we know who it was that was doing the stoning?

Well, let's take a look. stoning.

No, wait a minute. The stoning isn't until... Yeah, it was Lister and Derby that he was stoned.

[61 : 53] I'm trying to locate the text. That slips my mind right now. Well, how many times I've preached that?

Pathetic. Where is it? Yeah, yeah, right.

Thank you. Thank you. 14. Yeah, 14, and they left him for dead. And many are of the opinion that this is what Paul was talking about when he said, I knew a man in Christ who was caught up into the third heaven, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, and received an abundance of revelations.

And many believe that it is in connection with this stoning experience, and that he actually had died. And scholars are still divided over that, whether he actually died and saw these visions, et cetera, or whether he was comatose and still saw the visions.

So, it would appear that he actually died, and that he was brought back to life. They supposed him to be dead in verse 19 of chapter 14.

[63 : 16] At one point here it says both Gentiles and Jews conspired to stone him. Yeah. I'm just curious about what was the population of that area?

Was it predominantly Jewish? No, I would say, I would certainly say it was not predominantly Jewish. There weren't hardly any areas outside of Israel that were predominantly Jewish, any more than there are today.

The Jew has almost always been a minority wherever he has been. And as you go through the book of Acts, you will discover that with the Jews, almost all of Paul's opposition was doctrinal.

They were convinced that he was teaching against the law of Moses and that he was corrupting Judaism. But every time Paul had conflict with Gentiles, it was never over doctrine.

It was over dollars. It was over money. It was he had somehow cut into their pocketbook. And whether it was with the silversmiths and those who made the images, or whether it was this group here who profited from this girl, you could not teach anything that would rile up the Gentiles as regards doctrine because they were so open to every and any weird, strange doctrine, multiple gods, deities, you name it, that came down the pike.

[64 : 51] If you proclaimed one, they would just add that to their list. It didn't make any difference to them. And with Rome, Rome could care less what Christians believed, and they didn't even care that Jesus was regarded as God by Christians.

That didn't bother them at all. Rome's only interest was political. It was not religious. And they saw Christians as crossing over into the political sphere when they said that Jesus was the only rightful Lord.

That made it a political offense, not just a religious one, a political offense to the establishment of Rome. And many people don't understand that, but Rome could have cared less about what you believe religiously.

It didn't make a bit of difference to them. They were so multicultural and diverse that it didn't matter. But when you got into the political area, then they saw that as a threat.

Other comments or questions? Anyone? Well, thank you for being here for this March session.

[66 : 05] And the Lord willing, we will be here for the second Friday in April upcoming. And we will continue this background material. I had hoped to do it in one sitting, so we'll do it in two.

So what else is new? And then the following session will actually get underway, I think, with Philippians 1.1. And there's just a ton of really good content that's very, very practical and very much plugged into where we are today in a lot of ways.

Thank you all for being here today. Right here.