

## “Take a Joy Ride” (Philippians Overview)

**THE TITLE:** This letter is called *Pros Philippesious*, “To the Philippians.” The church at Philippi is the first church Paul founded in Macedonia.

**THE AUTHOR:** The letter of Philippians claims the apostle Paul as its author and reflects his personality. Internal and external evidence also strongly support Paul’s authorship.

**THE PURPOSE:** Paul has several purposes in writing Philippians. First, Paul writes to thank the church for their concern for him and the gifts they have given (1:5; 4:10–20). Second, Paul wants the church to know how things are going for him in his imprisonment (1:12–26) and what his plans are should he be released (2:23–24). Third, Paul encourages the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances (1:27–30; 4:4). Fourth, Paul exhorts the church to humility with a view toward unity (2:1–18; 4:2–3) in the midst of discord and division. Fifth, Paul commends Timothy to the church and gives a report about the health and plans of Epaphroditus (2:19–30). Sixth, Paul writes to warn the church of the negative teaching and consequences of certain false teachers (3:2–3, 17–21).

**THE THEME:** The theme of Philippians might well be: “Rejoice in the Lord always.” Philippians is essentially a thank you letter for the sacrificial giving that the Philippians have made on Paul’s behalf. But because their own sacrifice was so great they began to doubt God’s continued provision. Thus, the themes of (1) thanksgiving for God’s provision, (2) regarding one another as more important than oneself, (3) rejoicing over their salvation in the face of opposition, and (4) trusting God for His care are all found in this letter. To reduce the theme to one item is to ignore its specific purposes and occasional character.<sup>1</sup>

**THE OCCASION:** Paul was in prison when he penned this letter to the Philippians (cf. 1:7, 13, 16). External evidence indicates that he wrote this letter within his first Roman imprisonment (59–61 CE). However, since there had already been some correspondence between Paul and the Philippians, it is likely that this letter was written at least half way through his imprisonment. What is more, since Paul expresses confidence of his imminent release (1:25; 2:24), the letter must surely have been written toward the end of his stay. Therefore, a date in 61 CE seems most reasonable.

**THE AUDIENCE:** There are a number of important characteristics about the Philippian church. First, the church consists primarily of Gentiles. Second, women played an important role in the life of the church. Third, the church is a model of generosity. Fourth, the church is loyal, as evidenced by its gifts of support to Paul and her desire to know Paul’s state during his Roman imprisonment.

**KEY WORDS:** The words “joy” (*chara*),<sup>2</sup> “rejoice” (*chairō*),<sup>3</sup> and “rejoice with” (*sunchairo*)<sup>4</sup> appear a combined total of sixteen times. Words translated “participation/fellowship” (*koinonia*),<sup>5</sup> “partakers” (*sugkoinonos*),<sup>6</sup> and “share” (*koinoneō*)<sup>7</sup> occur a total of five times. Words related to the mind, to thinking, and to remembering occur almost three dozen times.

**KEY PHRASE:** “In Christ,” “in the Lord,” and similar phrases occur close to twenty times.<sup>8</sup> In a book of 104 verses, Jesus’ name or title occurs 51 times. Christ is central in Paul’s heart, mind, and theology.

**KEY VERSES:** “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (1:21).

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (4:4)

“Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (4:11–13).

## **SUMMARY STRUCTURES:**

Phil 1:1–26	Encouragement for the Philippians
Phil 1:27–4:9	Exhortation for the Philippians
Phil 4:10–23	Gratitude for the Philippians

Phil 1:1–26	Joy in suffering
Phil 1:27–2:30	Joy in serving
Phil 3:1–4:1	Joy in believing
Phil 4:2–23	Joy in giving <sup>9</sup>

Copyright © 2009 Keith R. Krell. All rights reserved. All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any articles written by Keith Krell, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Keith Krell, Timeless Word Ministries, 2508 State Ave NE Olympia, WA 98506, 360-352-9044, [www.timelessword.com](http://www.timelessword.com)

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, “Philippians: Introduction, Argument, and Outline”: <http://www.bible.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> Phil 1:4, 25, 2:2, 29; 4:1.

<sup>3</sup> Phil 1:18 [twice]; 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4 [twice], 10.

<sup>4</sup> Phil 2:17, 18.

<sup>5</sup> Phil 1:5; 2:1; 3:10.

<sup>6</sup> Phil 1:7.

<sup>7</sup> Phil 4:15.

<sup>8</sup> Phil 1:1, 14, 26; 2:19, 24, 29; 3:1, 3, 8, 9, 14; 4:1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce B. Barton, Livingstone Corporation Staff, Philip Wesley Comfort, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*. Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1995), 13.