

# Castle Church

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## THE DIFFERENCE HE MAKES

### STUDIES IN PHILIPPIANS

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2012

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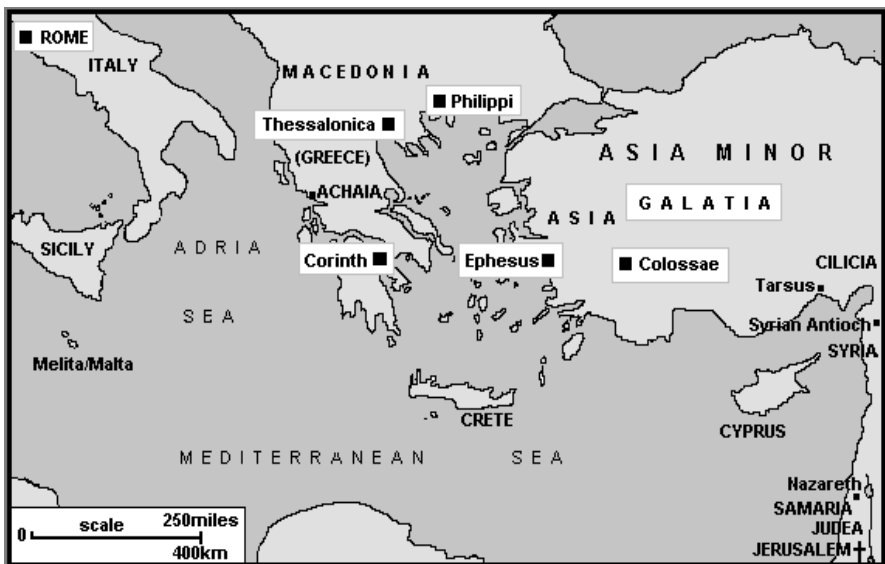
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# Philippians

## *What is an epistle?*

Most of the New Testament is made up of ‘epistles.’ They are basically letters sent by the leaders of the newly founded Christian Church. As the good news of Jesus spread out from Jerusalem, those leaders went from city to city telling people about Jesus and setting up new churches. They would then leave someone in charge before moving onto the next city. Obviously problems would spring up in those new baby churches, especially as these new Christians tried to work out how to live for Jesus in a culture which maybe wasn’t always in line with their new found faith. Also, false teachers were all over the place trying to get people to follow them by teaching a slightly ‘off-beam’ perverted version of the gospel. The leaders of the church stayed in touch with the new churches by writing letters to them, dealing with specific problems they were having. Most of these letters were written by Paul, but others were written by other leaders such as John, Peter and Jude. We don’t actually know who wrote one of them (Hebrews). We are going to spend the next few weeks looking at one of Paul’s letters to the church in Philippi.



### ***Where was Philippi?***

Philippi was the first church on European soil! It was in the region of Macedonia which is now the southern Balkan countries; Greece, Kosovo, Bulgaria and of course The Republic of Macedonia! Paul, Timothy, Silas and Luke visited Philippi on their second missionary journey. We can read about it in Acts 16. While they were there, an



important tradeswoman called Lydia was converted to the faith and she paved the way for the gospel to spread by providing hospitality for Paul and his co-workers. Paul and Silas were then jailed after a riot. Paul exorcised a demon out of a young slave girl, but her owners used to make huge profits from her fortune telling with people paying to see her; a bit like a 'freak-show.' When she was exorcised her potential for making money

was gone and her owners started the riot against Paul's teaching. Eventually they were forced to leave the town. On Paul's third missionary journey he again visited the Philippian church, Acts 20. It was mainly a Gentile church and very supportive of Paul's ministry.

### ***Why was Philippians written?***

The letter serves to say thank you to the church for a gift sent to Paul while he was in prison. The gift came by Epaphroditus, who, after a serious illness, carried the letter back to the church. Paul saw the Philippians as partners in the gospel.

### ***Date and place of writing***

The letter tells us that Paul was in prison, but it doesn't tell us where. We know that Paul was a prisoner at Philippi, Jerusalem, Caesarea and Rome. Philippians may have been written at Caesarea, but more probably Rome. If it was Rome, then it would be during or after the period recorded in Acts 28, that is, after 60 AD. The letter is usually dated 62-63 AD.



# ***Week Beginning 30<sup>th</sup> January***

## ***Philippians 1:1-11***

Paul begins his letter by talking about the fact that the Philippians are ‘partners with him in the gospel.’ Partnerships usually develop from working together on some meaningful project. It means that there is some kind of shared endeavour that holds the two parties together. For Paul and the Philippian Christians, that was their shared belief in the power of the good news of Jesus to transform people. So, even when separated by imprisonment, Paul and the Philippians have a shared identity and purpose.

### ***Read Philippians 1:1-8***

1. What do we learn about how Paul’s feelings for the Philippian Christians? Why does he feel like this about them?
2. What are Paul and the Philippians partners in? What do they share in common? (also read 4:10-19)
3. ‘Partnership’ is mentioned in v5. What does this section teach us about why Paul wrote this letter?
4. How have the Philippians expressed their partnership with Paul? (see Chapter 4 v10-20). What do you think motivated them to do this?
5. When did their partnership start? How long has it been going? Did it stop when Paul left Philippi?
6. What have the Philippians contributed to the partnership?
7. What has Paul contributed to the partnership?

8. What light does this shed on:
  - the cause of Paul's joy (1:4)?
  - Paul's confidence (1:6)?
  - Paul's affection for them (1:7-8)
  
9. How do you think we can express partnership in the gospel with:
  - our church family members
  - Christians around the world

***Read Philippians 1:9-11***

10. In these verses, Paul prays for the Philippians. What is his ultimate desire for them?
  
11. What time frame does he have in mind?
  
12. According to Paul's prayer, what will enable them to 'discern what is best' (v10)? And who is it best for?
  
13. What difference would it make to our lives if God gave the things Paul prays for in v9?
  
14. How do the things Paul prays for compare with the things that we usually pray for in our own lives?
  
15. What helpful lessons can we take away about who to pray for and what to pray for them?



## ***Week Beginning 6<sup>th</sup> February***

### ***Philippians 1:12-30***

Paul has a very clear goal in life – living is all about Jesus! It's knowing Jesus and living for Him. No one can stop him living for Jesus. No matter what you might do to Paul, he can still live for Jesus! And if you do the worst and kill him, you only do him a favour, because he'll then be with Jesus! It's a win-win situation. Jesus has given Paul a new idea of freedom. Now that he recognises that both life and death are ultimately about Christ, there's nothing that can frustrate him! He is FREE!!

#### ***Read Philippians 1:12-26***

1. What do we learn about Paul's circumstances at the time he wrote?
2. How does Paul seem to react to his circumstances? Is that how we would naturally react?
3. In what ways has what has happened to Paul served to advance the good news? (v12)
4. What does this tell us about Paul's aims and goals?
5. Which verse sums us Paul's aim in life best?
6. Can anyone stop Paul achieving his aim?
  - what if you throw him in prison?
  - what if you kill him?
  - What if you let him out of prison?
7. How free is Paul while he's chained up in prison?

8. In v15-18 Paul talks about people's motives for preaching about Christ. Not all of those motives are good and proper. What is Paul's response to this? Does that surprise you? Why?
9. What does it say about how God uses imperfect motives in imperfect humans?
10. Why do you think Paul wanted the Philippians (and us) to know about his circumstances and his responses?

**Read v 27-30**

11. What do we learn about the Philippians' circumstances? How are these similar to Paul's?
12. Does this help us understand more of Paul's purpose in telling them/us what to do in v27?
13. How is it connected to his own response to what's happening in his life?
14. For Christians, what difference does it make to having Jesus as our ultimate 'goal' in life?
15. How can we apply v12-30 to our everyday struggles as Christians waiting for heaven?



## ***Week Beginning 13<sup>th</sup> February***

### ***Philippians 2:1-30***

It's clear that the unity Paul desperately wants in the Philippian church is not simply a unity of 'avoidance,' where they ignore any differences they have with each other and pretend that everything is fine. It's a unity built on a common mindset, a common love and a common purpose. Jesus himself needs to be the focus of that unity, not any man-manufactured structures or ideals.

#### ***Read v1-11***

1. What instructions does Paul give to the Philippians, about how they are to treat each other (v2-4)
2. Why is that difficult?
3. Whose example should we follow? (v5)
4. What did it cost Jesus to put us first? (v7-8)
5. What might is cost for us to put others first?
6. What would the church and the world look like if people really did this?
7. What was the result of Jesus doing all this?
8. If we are Christians and others know it – and our attitudes are like those of Jesus, then who does it point those people to?
9. Why is this a good thing?

**Read verses 12-18**

10. What's their Christian behaviour been like up until now? (v12)
11. What are they to continue to do? V12 What do you think it means?
12. Why do we know that it doesn't mean we should try to earn our way into heaven?
13. What's the good news that we see in v13?
14. Why do you think the instructions of v14 are important?
15. What are the two reasons Paul gives us for not complaining or arguing? (v15)
16. According to v16, what will we be doing if we act like this? What do you think that means?

**Read v19-30**

17. Who's interests are on the heart of Timothy? (v20-22)
  18. What was Epaphroditus prepared to do for the sake of the gospel? (v27 and 30)
  19. Why do you think Paul shares his travel plans along with those of Timothy and Epaphroditus?
  20. How can we apply this to our lives if we are also 'partners in the gospel?'
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## ***Week Beginning 20<sup>th</sup> February***

### ***Philippians 3:1-11***

There was a group of people in Philippi who were called the Judaisers. They were people who called themselves Christians but taught that you become and stay a Christian in a very different way than Paul did. It was all about what boxes you could tick in your own life as to whether you'd done this or done that.... mainly based on old Jewish practices. That meant that the real gospel which says we can only be right with God through what Jesus did on the cross was wrong. So, in chapter 3 Paul argues strongly against the Judaisers.

1. Why is it no problem for Paul to write down the real truth for the Philippians? (v1)
2. Why do you think a safeguard is important? What are the consequences of following the Judaisers?
3. What does he call the Judaisers in v2? Why do you think he's using such strong language?
4. What does he call their teaching? (v2)
5. One of the things the Judaisers said you had to do was have boys circumcised at birth. Paul disagrees. What does he call the Judaisers (v2)
6. In v3 what does Paul say real Christians do instead of circumcise?
7. Paul says that when it comes to ticking boxes – he's ticked them all. What are those boxes according to v5-6?

8. What does Paul say all those things are to him now that he's a Christian? (v7-8)
9. What does he say is important now? (v8-9)
10. How much is he relying on ticking boxes? (v9)
11. Instead of knowing that he's ticked lots of boxes – who is it that he wants to know? (v10)
12. What's the difference between knowing about someone and knowing them?
13. As Christians – how do we know Jesus more?
14. What happens (or what are the consequences) when we know Jesus? (v10-11)
15. Which is the worst of those and which is the best?
16. Why is the best better than the worst?



## ***Week Beginning 27<sup>th</sup> February***

### ***Philippians 3:12-4:1***

In these verses Paul pictures the Christian life as being like running a race. As with all races, it's not how fast you run, but whether you get across the finishing line.

#### ***Read Philippians 3:12-4:1***

1. Where did the race begin? (look back at v7-9)
2. How did Paul become a runner?
3. Where is the finish line?
4. How far has Paul got?
5. How does he run? Which direction, what focus, what level of effort?
6. What is his attitude to other runners?
7. What is the prize? Who gets it?
8. Paul warns about being diverted off course in v15. What does he ask that God will do if we are diverted?
9. Paul is not talking about working hard in order to get to heaven, what does he remind us about in v16?
10. When did we get (attain) the prize?
11. What have we got to be careful of? (v17-19)

12. We might be living on earth now – but if we're Christians – where is our ultimate citizenship? (v20)
13. How does Paul say we are to wait for Jesus? Why do you think we sometimes don't do that?
14. What kind of power does Jesus have? (v20-21)
15. As we live in this life – why's that really good news?
16. What's Paul's last command for us as we run towards the goal? (4v1)



We just addend the 'finish' banner,  
nice touch don't you think?

## ***Week Beginning 5<sup>th</sup> March***

### ***Philippians 4:2-23***

We ended the last study with Paul's call to 'stand firm.' In these final verses of his short letter, Paul unpacks for us how and why we should 'stand firm'. He also explains how, as we wait for heaven we can and should be content in our Christian lives.

#### ***Read Philippians 4:2-20***

1. What insights do these sections give us into some of the things that might have threatened the ability of the Philippian Christians to 'stand firm.'
  - v2-3
  - v4-7
  - v8-9
  - v10-19
2. In v2-3, Paul sends a personal message to two women in the church who've fallen out with each other. When Christians fall out, what effect does it have:
  - on them?
  - on the church family?
3. What does Paul do about the problem?
4. What can we learn about dealing with 'fall-outs' in our church?
5. In v4-7 Paul talks about our anxieties. How does Paul urge us to respond to anxiety?

6. Paul tells us that “The Lord is near” v5. What could he mean? What light does Psalm 145:14-20 shed on the significance of this saying? When is He near us?
7. In v8-19, Paul discusses contentment. What do you think he means by being content? (v11)
8. Why would Paul need to learn to be content when facing ‘plenty’?
9. How does Christian contentment compare with the ‘don’t worry, be happy’ philosophy?
10. How does Paul describe the gifts from the Philippian church? (v18)
11. What does that tell us about any gifts, either financial or other, that we make to the church or those working for the cause of the gospel?

### ***Read Philippians 4:21-23***

12. How does Paul describe the Christians in Philippi? (v21)
13. What’s Paul’s final greeting in v23. How does that sum up the whole letter?
14. What is the main thing you have learnt throughout this series?

### **The Back Pew – Jeff Larson**



In any circumstance I have learned the secret of being **CONTENT** whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. **Phil 4:12**

# Castle Church STAFFORD

*Sharing the love of God through our common faith and life in Jesus*

**The Difference HE makes**

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF

**PHILIPPIANS**

***Study Notes***

**February/March**  
**2012**