

Bible Survey, part 10 – The New Testament The Epistles (Philippians) “God’s Sovereign Control”

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Philip of Macedon - coin

“... the chief city in that part of Macedonia ...” Acts 16:12

“... a Roman colony...” Acts 16:12

Paul arrived in Philippi in Acts 16 on his **second missionary journey**. It was the **first city in Europe** where Paul preached Christ.





In Acts 16, the Greek word used for “city magistrates” = “**Praetors**”
 Archaeology now confirms that Philippi was the only Roman colony where the rulers were called
 “**Praetors.**”

“Although the rulers are called ‘**duumvirs**’ in the other colony cities, the rulers at Philippi wished to be called ‘**praetors**’.” Cicero



Sir William Ramsay

“One of the most impressive claims to the historicity of the Book of Acts is that Luke always gets titles right. How a writer handles titles quickly betrays if he is trying to construct a forgery or if he was there as an eyewitness.”

“Every official in Acts is found precisely where he ought to be – Proconsuls in senatorial provinces, Asiarchs in Ephesus, **Praetors in Philippi**, etc.”

“The only reasonable conclusion is that the Book of Acts must have been written by an eyewitness of the events – **exactly as the Bible claims it was.**”

“**The Prison Epistles**”:

- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- Philemon

Paul wrote these letters in A.D. 61-62 while he was in “prison” in Rome awaiting trial before Emperor Nero (Acts 28).

Paul had maintained close personal ties with the church of Philippi over the years.

Of all the churches that Paul started – the Philippian church was the only church that ever financially supported his ministry.

“Now as you Philippians know . . . after I left you, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving but you . . . for you sent me aid again and again to help with my needs.” Philippians 4:15-16

The Philippians dispatched Epaphroditus [Philippians 2:25] to go to Rome, see how Paul was doing, and give Paul another monetary gift.

The letter to the Philippians is really (1) a “**thank you note**” for their gift; and (2) a “**status report**” on how Paul was doing in jail in Rome.

#1 – “I’m thankful for your (monetary) gift.”

“I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gift you sent.” Philippians 4:18

#2 – “God has been in control all along – and everything that has happened to me has turned out for the good.”

“Now I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has actually served to **advance** the Gospel.” Philippians 1:12

#3 – “I expect to be released soon.”

“I hope to send Timothy to you as soon as I see how things go. I am confident in the Lord that I myself will be coming to see you shortly.” Philippians 2:23-24

“After he made his defense, the Apostle was sent again upon the ministry of preaching; then he was brought back to the same city [Rome] a second time and suffered martyrdom.” Eusebius

“After suffering in Rome, Paul went to ‘the boundary of the West’ [Spain] preaching the Gospel.” Clement

Paul’s letter to the Philippians was a **personal note** to his **most personal church** . . .

- **Thanking them** for their support
- **Assuring them** that he was doing okay

SO WHAT?

Paul got shipped to Rome [Acts 27] because of his Jewish enemies in Israel.

“. . . has **actually served to advance the Gospel.**” Philippians 1:12

“Most of the brethren have been made more confident in the Lord because of my imprisonment and have become much more bold to speak the Word of God without fear.” Philippians 1:14

Paul: “Because I was **willing to go to jail** for Christ – lots of Christians have become more willing to **stand up** for Christ – and this has **advanced** the Gospel!”

“It has become **well known** throughout the **whole** Praetorian Guard, and to **all the rest** [of the palace officials] that my imprisonment is for Christ.” Philippians 1:13

The "Praetorian Guard" was the **most elite regiment** in the entire Roman army.

- Established by Caesar Augustus (31 B.C.)
- Personal bodyguard of the emperor

By the time of Paul, they had become the most powerful political force in Rome, **deposing and crowning emperors** at their pleasure.

"The Praetorian Guard became the power behind the throne, with the ability to make or break an emperor, and were the most privileged group in the Roman military." Sandra Bingham, *The Praetorian Guard: A History of Rome's Elite Special Forces*

One of the duties of the Praetorians was to guard those prisoners who were scheduled to appear before the emperor.

Which means: One-by-one – for two years – **every member** of the Praetorian Guard had to take a shift being **handcuffed to the Apostle Paul!**

"All the believers in Rome greet you, especially those of Caesar's household." Philippians 4:22

"God causes **all things** to work together for good to those who love Him." Romans 8:28

"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good . . ." Genesis 50:20