

Paul's Epistle (Letter) to the Philippians

Winter, 2024

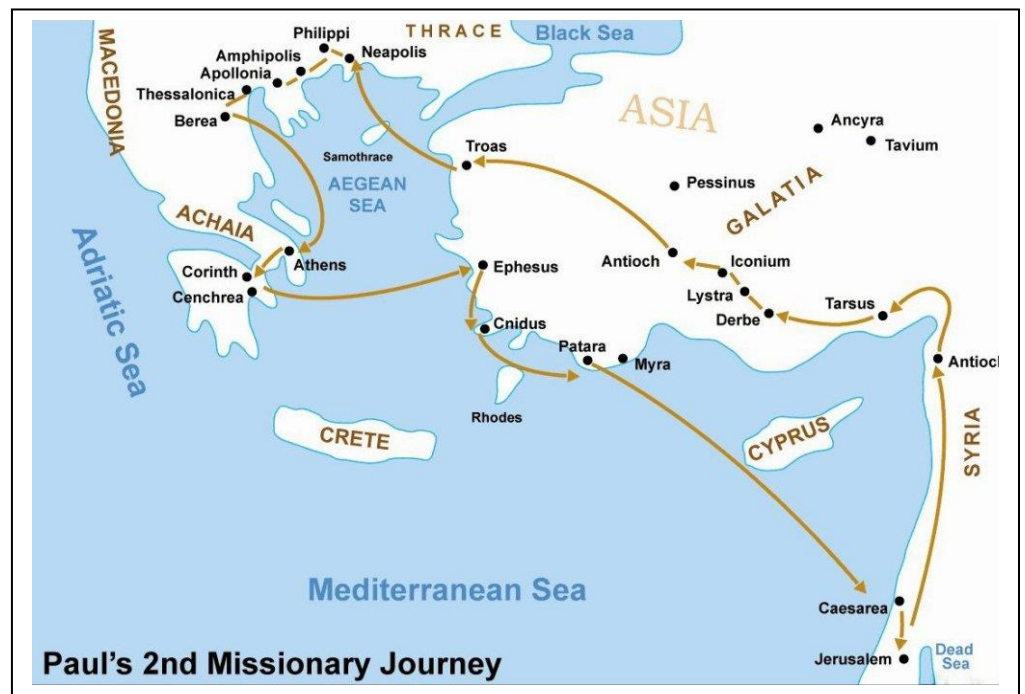
Introduction

The City of Philippi was named after its founder, Philip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. It was on the strategic route from Europe to Asia. The Romans conquered the city in 168 BC, and it later became a Roman province. In 42 BC Antony and Octavian (in 27 BC he became "Caesar Augustus") defeated Brutus and Cassius at the battle of Philippi, and it was then settled as a Roman colony with Roman military veterans. A Roman colony differed from all other forms of municipality in the provinces in having a large nucleus of Roman citizens, who retained all the rights of their citizenship, and a civic administration modelled on that of Rome. The city was a miniature Rome, its official language was Latin, and its inhabitants thought of themselves as Romans.

The Jewish community in Philippi must have been very small. There was no synagogue within the walls, and the congregation which met at the place of prayer by the riverside consisted mostly, if not entirely, of women. One of them was not a Jewess but a God-fearer, i.e. a Gentile who had been attracted to Judaism without taking the final step of becoming a proselyte (G.B. Carid, *Paul's Letters from Prison*, Pages 95-97).

Philippians (along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon" are called Paul's "letters from prison" since they all refer to him writing while in Roman custody. Biblical scholars disagree over which imprisonment this was for Paul: Caesarea, before going to Rome (Acts 23:23-26:32); while in Rome the first time (Acts 28:11-31); or the last Roman imprisonment shortly before Paul's martyrdom. It is my opinion that this was Paul's first imprisonment in Rome after which he was released and continued his apostolic ministry, possible going west from there, possible as far as present-day Spain, according to tradition.

The Book of Acts gives detailed information about when Paul was in Philippi. During his "second missionary journey" (Acts 15:36-21:16) he visited the city (Acts 16:11-40) as well as on his "third" (20:6). Though not spending as much time there as in other places (e.g. Ephesus), he knew the congregation well and had strong ties to the people there, and they with him.



Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Paul and Barnabus (who accompanied him on the first missionary journey) separated over the issue of bring John (called Mark) along on the second missionary journey. Paul and Silas went and were later joined by Timothy and Luke at some point ("we" verses starting 16:10). The second journey retraced some of the territory from the first but continued into new territory after Paul received the "Macedonian Call" (16:6-10).

Read Acts 16:11-40

1. Why did the group go to the "riverside" on the Sabbath?
2. Who was baptized following this?
3. It appears that the group continued to meet at the riverside. What eventually interrupted this?
4. Did being beaten and jailed deter Paul and Silas from witnessing to Christ?
5. After they prevented the jailer from committing suicide after thinking his prisoners had escaped, what did the jailer ask them (16:31f.; see also 2:32)?
6. Who was baptized following this?
7. What had the magistrates in Philippi done that was illegal under Roman law (16:37-39)?

Read Acts 20:1-6

Outline (TLSB, Page 2030)

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:3-11)
- III. News About Paul's Preaching (1:12-26)
 - A. Paul's Imprisonment (1:12-18)
 - B. Life in Christ (1:19-26)
- IV. Exhortations (1:27-2:18)
 - A. Behave as Citizens Worthy of the Gospel (1:27-30)
 - B. Christ's Example of Humility (2:1-11)
 - C. Lights in the World (2:12-18)
- V. Travel Plans for Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30)
- VI. Further Explanations (3:1-4:9)
 - A. Warning against Mutilators (3:1-11)
 - B. Straining toward the Goal by Imitating Paul (3:12-4:1)
 - C. Exhortations, Encouragement, and Prayer (4:2-9)
- VII. Thanks for God's Provision and the Gifts Received (4:10-20)
- VIII. Final Greetings (4:21-23)