

Equipping Hour

Philippi: The Giving Church

Key Verse: Acts 16:12

“And from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a *Roman* colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.”

Overview

The city of Philippi was founded around 350-300 BC and received its name from Philip II of Macedon who was the father of Alexander the Great. In the second century BC, Philippi became the part of the Roman province of Macedonia. In 42 BC, Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Philippi establishing Philippi as a Roman colony.



The city was located 13 miles from the seaport town of Neapolis on the Aegean Sea. It was on the west-east commercial route famously known as ‘Via Egnatia.’ It enjoyed a privileged status and was granted the use of Roman law, exemption from many taxes, and Roman citizenship for its residents. It became the leading city in the district of Macedonia and the people of Philippi prided themselves on being citizens of Rome. The total population of the city was around 10,000 people at the time of Paul’s visit.

Religiously, not much is known during Paul’s day. However, Paul was met by a demon-possessed slave girl who was used by her masters as a fortune-teller. Later discoveries found carvings showing the worship of the goddess Diana on the acropolis above the city.

The church was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey around AD 51. Philippi had very few Jewish citizens as there was no synagogue in the city for Paul to preach in (the requirement to form a synagogue was 10 Jewish men who were heads of a household). The church was started when Paul met a group of women who were praying outside the city by the Gangites River. One of the women was named Lydia. God opened her heart to respond to the gospel and the church most likely began to meet in her house. It is possible that Luke was left in Philippi to be their pastor (see Acts 16:12 and 20:5–6 and the use of ‘we’ and ‘us’) for about five years. Paul wrote a letter (Philippians) to a healthy and thriving church during his first imprisonment in Rome around AD 61.

As we study this church, we will see that there are many commendable characteristics about this church, but also some potential problems.

Commendable Characteristics

Evangelistic Zeal

1. Acts 16:13–14. What did Paul do at the prayer meeting? _____
2. Acts 16:25–30. What does the jailer ask Paul and Silas? _____
 - a. What were Paul and Silas doing in prison? _____
 - b. Who was listening to them? _____
3. Acts 16:32. What did Paul and Silas do at the jailer’s house? _____
4. Philippians 1:5. What does Paul commend the church for doing? _____

5. Philippians 1:7. What did the Philippians become partakers of? _____

Obedience to the Great Commission

1. Matthew 28:19–20. What three aspects of discipleship does Christ emphasize? _____

2. Acts 16:15. What did Lydia and her household do? _____
3. Acts 16:33. What did the jailer and his household do? _____
4. Philippians 3:1–2. Why is implied in Paul writing “the same things again”? _____
5. Philippians 2:24. Who did the Philippians have as their “messenger”? _____

Biblical Leadership

1. Philippians 1:1. What two offices did the church establish? _____

Joyful Giving

1. 2 Corinthians 9:7. What kind of giver does God love? _____
2. Acts 2:18. What does Paul know this church has? _____
3. Acts 16:15, 34. Who opened their homes up to Paul and the other men? _____
4. Philippians 4:15–16. What did the church do for Paul? _____

5. Philippians 4:18. What did the church do for Paul in Rome? _____
6. 2 Corinthians 8:1–5. What did the churches in Macedonia do? _____

Potential Problems

Compromise

1. Philippians 3:1–3. Who was coming to deceive the Philippians? _____

2. Philippians 3:17–19. What does Paul warn them about? _____

Disunity

1. Philippians 1:27. What does Paul desire to hear about them? _____

2. Philippians 4:2–3. What was the problem with Euodia and Syntyche? _____

“The Philippian church might best be characterized overall as a ‘caring’ church. It’s obvious that the believers cared lovingly and sacrificially for Paul and his ongoing ministry. They gave like few, if any, other churches.”
—Dr. Richard Mayhue

Application

1. What can we learn about the attitude of the Philippian church?
2. How did the attitude of the believers overflow into other areas of their lives?
3. What can you learn personally from the Christians at Philippi and apply to your life?