



Philippians

“A life worthy of the Gospel!”

Sunday Morning
Adult Bible Class

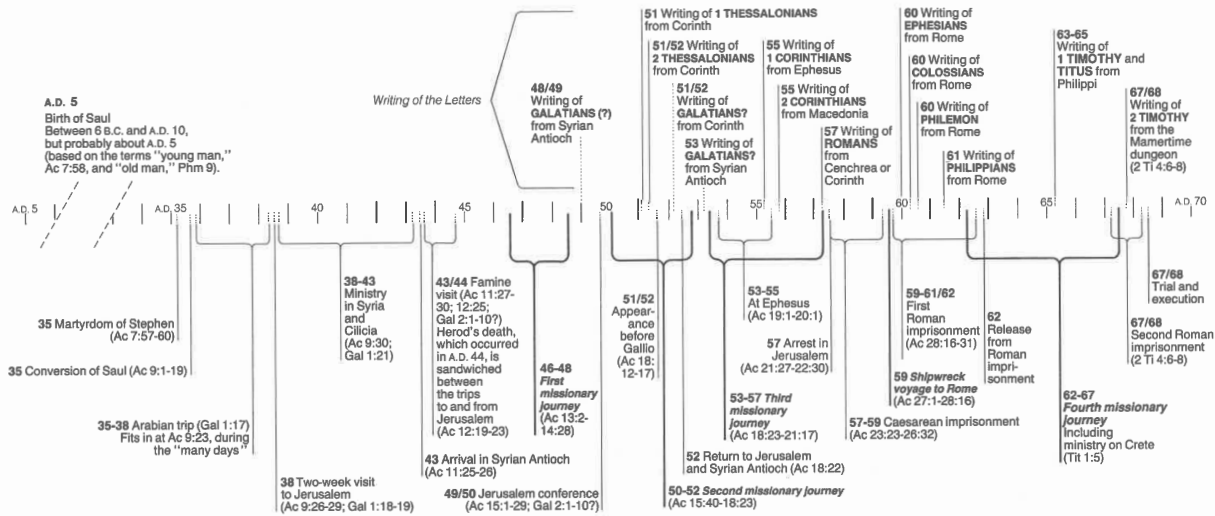
Lord of the Lakes
Lutheran Church
Forest Lake, Minnesota



Lord of the Lakes
LUTHERAN CHURCH

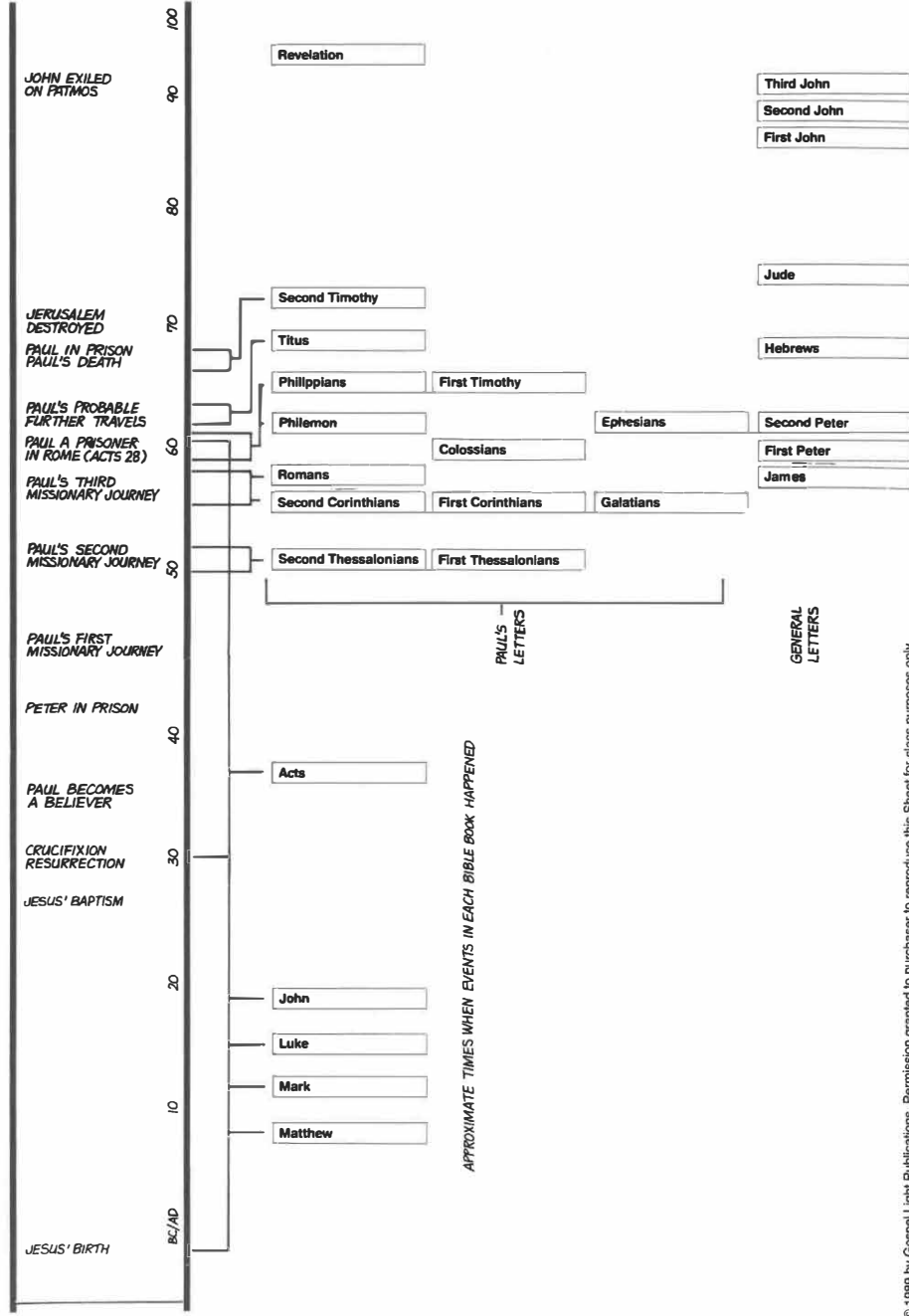
Time Line of Paul's Life

Lines, brackets and dotted lines help show sequence of events, but are not meant to point to precise months or days within a given year, since exact dating is difficult.



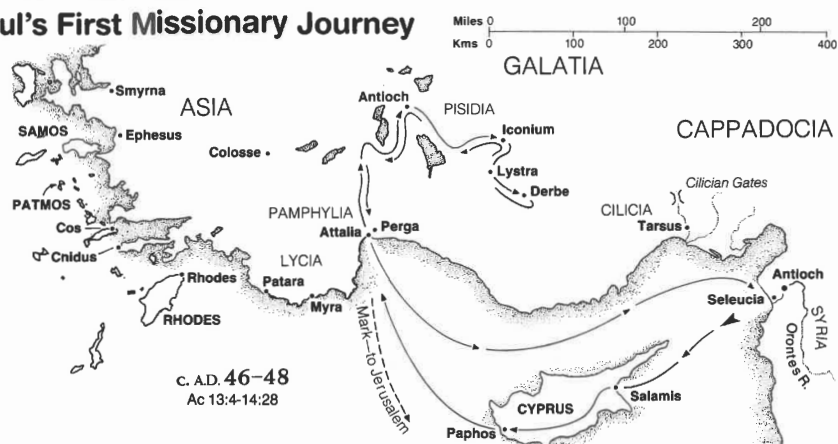
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When New Testament Events Happened



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Paul's First Missionary Journey



Paul's Second Missionary Journey

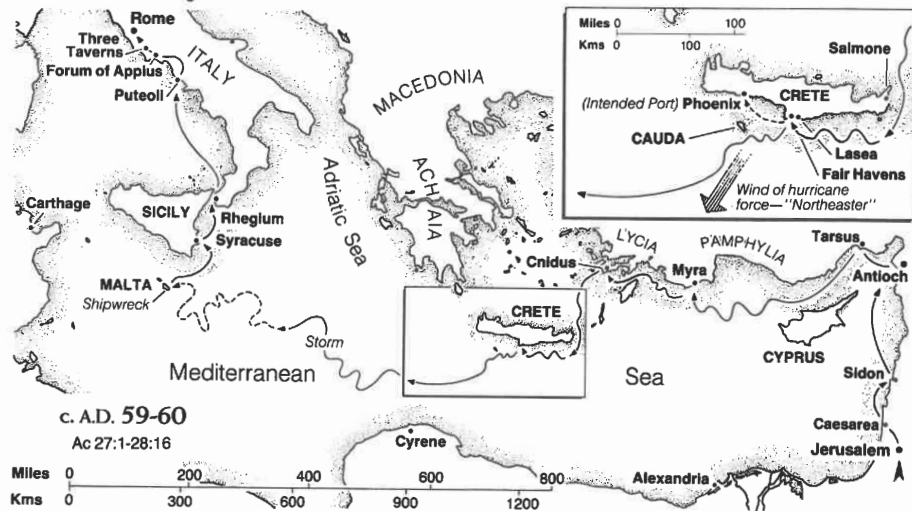


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Paul's Third Missionary Journey

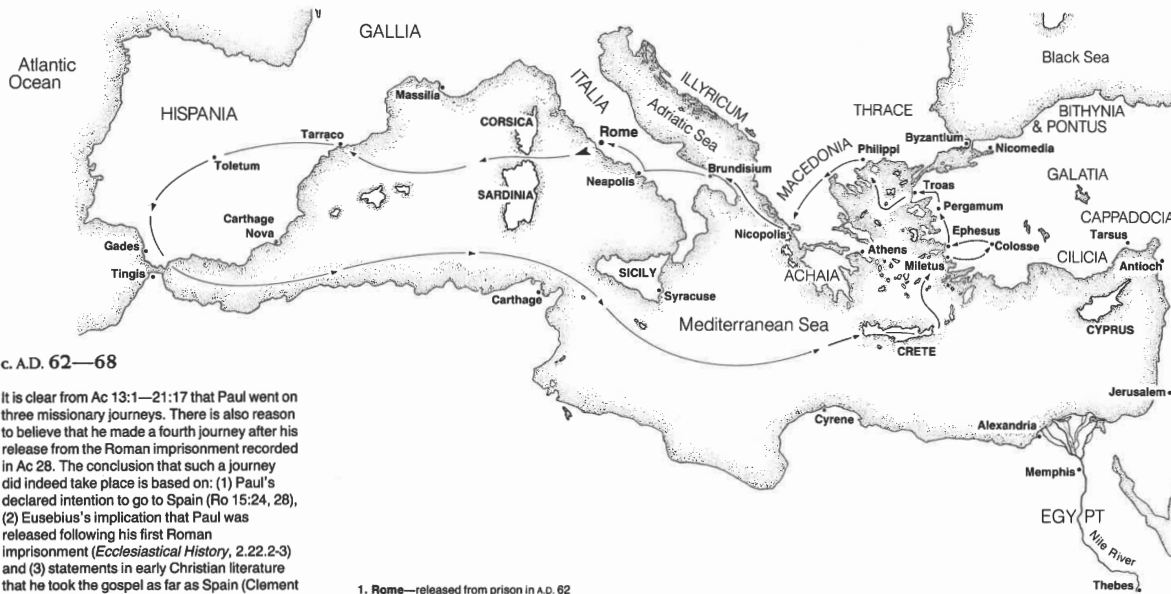


Paul's Journey to Rome



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Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey

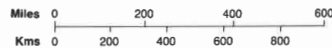


c. A.D. 62—68

It is clear from Ac 13:1—21:17 that Paul went on three missionary journeys. There is also reason to believe that he made a fourth journey after his release from the Roman imprisonment recorded in Ac 28. The conclusion that such a journey did indeed take place is based on: (1) Paul's declared intention to go to Spain (Ro 15:24, 28), (2) Eusebius's implication that Paul was released following his first Roman imprisonment (*Ecclesiastical History*, 2.22.2-3) and (3) statements in early Christian literature that he took the gospel as far as Spain (Clement of Rome, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, ch. 5; *Actus Petri Vercellenses*, chs. 1-3; Muratorian Canon, lines 34-39).

The places Paul may have visited after his release from prison are indicated by statements of intention in his earlier writings and by subsequent mention in the Pastoral Letters. The order of his travel cannot be determined with certainty, but the itinerary at the right seems likely.

1. Rome—released from prison in A.D. 62
2. Spain—62-64 (Ro 15:24, 28)
3. Crete—64-65 (Tit 1:5)
4. Miletus—65 (2Ti 4:20)
5. Colosse—66 (Phm 22)
6. Ephesus—66 (1Ti 1:3)
7. Philippi—66 (Php 2:23-24; 1Ti 1:3)
8. Nicopolis—66-67 (Tit 3:12)
9. Rome—67
10. Martyrdom—67/68

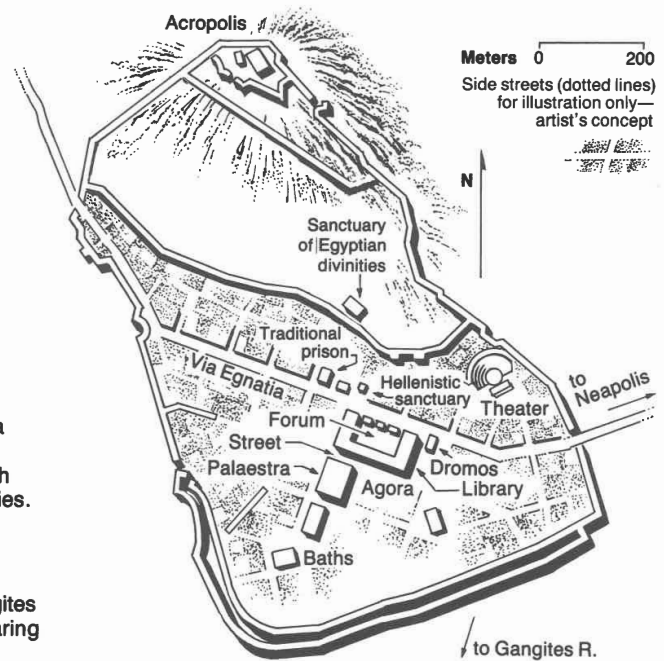


Philippi in the Time of Paul

The Roman colony of Philippi (*Colonia Augusta Julia Philippensis*) was an important city in Macedonia, located on the main highway leading from the eastern provinces to Rome. This road, the Via Egnatia, bisected the city's forum and was the chief cause of its prosperity and political importance. Ten miles distant on the coast was Neapolis, the place where Paul landed after sailing from Troas, in response to the Macedonian vision.

As a prominent city of the gold-producing region of Macedonia, Philippi had a proud history. Named originally after Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, the city was later honored with the name of Julius Caesar and Augustus. Many Italian settlers from the legions swelled the ranks of citizens and made Philippi vigorous and polyglot. It grew from a small settlement to a city of dignity and privilege. Among its highest honors was the *ius Italicum*, by which it enjoyed rights legally equivalent to those of Italian cities.

Ruins of the theater, the acropolis, the forum, the baths, and the western commemorative arch mentioned as the "gate" of the city in Ac 16:13 have been found. A little farther beyond the arch at the Gangites River is the place where Paul addressed some God-fearing women and where Lydia was converted.



Philippians 1:1–11

The joyful servant, Paul, gives encouragement

Look

Verse 1 *"To all the saints in Christ Jesus"*—Saints are holy ones through faith in Jesus.

Verse 1 *"Philippi"*—Paul had started the church in Philippi on his second missionary journey. See Acts 16:12 and the following verses for the account of Paul's initial work in that city.

Verse 2 *"Grace to you and peace."* Grace (God's undeserved mercy in Christ for sinners) is the cause of salvation, and peace is its result.

Discuss

1. Whom did Paul thank for the faith of the Philippians? for their continued growth in faith?
2. What was Paul's personal situation when he penned this letter?
3. In a few short verses, Paul tells us what being a Christian means. Complete the sentences.
 - When knowledge and depth of insight grow, _____.
 - When our love grows in knowledge and depth of insight, _____.
 - When this happens, _____.
 - Being pure and blameless means being _____.
 - When this happens, _____.

Apply

4. In these verses, Paul expressed his warm feelings for the Philippians. Why did Paul have such fond feelings for them? What model does this provide for us?
5. Sometimes we separate the heart and the mind. We view the mind as "knowing" things and the heart as "feeling" things. How did Paul show that knowledge and feelings, specifically love, are joined together?

Paul greeted the Philippian Christians. He expressed his love for them and prayed for their growth.

Philippians 1:12–19

Paul's imprisonment has served the gospel's cause

Look

Verse 12 *"What has happened to me"*—Paul was imprisoned in Rome at this time, accused of being a troublemaker, desecrating the temple, and forsaking the laws of Moses. (Acts 24:5–6)

Verse 15 *"Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry."* This is perhaps a reference to preachers who had arrived in Rome before Paul, who were now jealous of the attention Paul was receiving. Others, in the process of tearing Paul down, spoke about Paul's message, while proclaiming Christ.

Discuss

1. What blessings did Paul's imprisonment bring
 - for the gospel?

 - for the Christians in Rome?
2. Paul's imprisonment had caused people to take sides and speak about him. What were the two positions people took in regard to Paul? Why was Paul glad about the preaching, even the preaching of those who preached from false motives?
3. Up to now, Paul had reflected on the past. Now, however, he looked to the future. What was his attitude as he looked into the future? What two resources could he count on?
4. Paul was confident that through the prayers of the saints and the work of God's Spirit, he would be delivered. A better translation might be, "I will be victorious." What victory would be his if he lived? if he died?

Apply

5. What blessings does God give his sons and daughters through the trials he allows to enter their lives?

Paul rejoiced that the gospel continued to spread. He asked for the Philippians' prayers and was confident that through the power of the Spirit he would be victorious no matter what happened.

Philippians 1:20–30

Stand firm in the gospel

Discuss

1. Paul said that he was confident that he would not be ashamed. What did he have in mind with the word *ashamed*?
2. Of what positive blessing was Paul confident?
3. When Paul considered the two possible outcomes of his imprisonment, which did he prefer?
4. How did Paul think his trial would end? Why?
5. What did Paul say the Philippians would do to let their “manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (verse 27)?
6. What would the Philippians’ faith, perseverance, and courage provide to their enemies?

Apply

7. Agree or disagree: It is a blessing to suffer for Christ.
8. Evaluate your own life. Why would it be good if you died? What purpose does the Lord have in continuing to give you life?

Paul debated with himself whether he wanted to die or live. For the sake of his congregations, he was confident he would live and continue to serve them.

Philippians 2:1–11

Live in harmony and humility with one another

Look

- Verse 1 *“If there is any encouragement . . . comfort . . . participation . . . affection and sympathy”*—Paul uses an evangelical appeal with the expected answer, “Yes, of course we do.”
- Verse 6 *“Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped”*—Though Jesus Christ was and is God, equal to the Father in glory and majesty, he willingly set aside that majesty and glory. Rather than “grasping” it, he let go of it.
- Verse 9 *“God has highly exalted [Christ].”* In his exalted state (beginning with his resurrection and continuing for all eternity), God exalted his Son so that Jesus now completely employs the fullness of his deity at all times.

Discuss

1. What comes from being united with Christ, being comforted by his love, and enjoying fellowship with the Spirit?
2. What example of humility did Paul place before the Philippians?
3. Trace the path Jesus walked to win our salvation. This was a humble path on which Jesus sought our good, not his own.

Apply

4. If the attitudes Paul describes in verses 1–4 are missing, what can happen in a Christian home? a Christian congregation? a Christian friendship?
5. How does verse 11 describe one way in which God is glorified in our lives?

Paul reminded the Philippians of the spiritual blessings they had received in Christ and then reminded them of Christ’s humility, which won our salvation. These blessings guide and motivate Christians in their lives together.

Philippians 2:12–30

Live blameless lives in a godless world; words about Timothy and Epaphroditus

Look

Verse 12 *“But much more in my absence”*—This was a wonderful compliment that Paul paid to the Philippians. It is one thing to serve the Lord when your spiritual father is watching you but quite another when he is far away in prison.

Verse 25 *“I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus.”* Epaphroditus was a leader in the church at Philippi. The congregation had sent him bearing a gift to Paul. He was to serve Paul while he remained in chains for the gospel.

Discuss

1. Why does Paul tell the Philippians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling?
2. In what way do we Christians “shine as lights in the world” (verse 15)?
3. How would the Philippians’ living as children of light be a blessing to Paul?
4. How did Timothy differ from many other associates who had been with Paul in Rome?
5. Why did Paul desire the Philippians to welcome Epaphroditus, even though his time in Rome had been cut short?

Apply

6. Why do those who serve in foreign mission fields deserve our respect, gratitude, prayers, encouragement, and support?

Paul encouraged the Philippians to “shine as lights in the world.” He would soon send Timothy and Epaphroditus to minister to them.

Philippians 3:1–11

Beware of every threat to gospel joy

Look

Verse 2 *“Look out for the dogs . . . those who mutilate the flesh.”* False teachers, commonly known as Judaizers, had infiltrated the church at Philippi. While they spoke of Jesus as the Savior, they also preached that to procure salvation it was necessary to keep ceremonial laws that God had given in the Old Testament. Thus they proclaimed salvation by works—a foreign, false gospel.

Discuss

1. In the midst of this cheerful letter, why do Paul’s words become so vehement, calling certain people dogs?
2. The Judaizers claimed to be “the circumcision” (verse 3). Paul says that Christians are the ones who are really circumcised. Why?
3. Why did Paul give such a detailed description of his pre-Christ days of unbelief?
4. What was Paul willing to give up so that he could know Christ?
5. What was Paul’s final goal in life?
6. In addition to Christ’s righteousness, Paul wanted two things. What did he want? How are these two things related in our lives?

Apply

7. What is the value of repetition in hearing the truths of our faith?

Human righteousness means nothing. What matters is circumcision by the Spirit and knowing the power of Jesus’ resurrection.

Philippians 3:12–4:1

Press onward to the heavenly goal

Look

Verse 12 *“Not that I have already obtained this.”* Though Paul had received God’s righteousness through faith in Christ, Paul recognized he was still a sinner who needed to press on toward holy living.

Discuss

1. From the standpoint of where he presently stood, how did Paul view his life and his goal?
2. How did Paul address you and me in regard to our present level of insight and dedication to reaching our goal? Do you find comfort in his words? If so, explain why.
3. Paul encourages us to model ourselves after those who live according to the pattern he gave us. Who are we to avoid?
4. What contrast does Paul strike between the people he describes in verses 18 and 19 and us?
5. What will Jesus someday do to our mortal bodies?

Apply

6. What value do we find in the lives of God’s people, especially in those of the mature Christians who have weathered life’s storms, who have shaped their lives around God’s Word and will, and who have been blessed by the Lord with a rich measure of spiritual insight?
7. Paul urges us to stand firm in the hope we have. How can we best prepare ourselves to run the race to eternal life?

Paul encourages us to press on toward the goal of eternal life, which God has placed before us.

Philippians 4:2–9

Let the peace of the gospel be evident in your lives

Look

Verse 2 *“Euodia and . . . Syntyche”*—They were two prominent women in the congregation who became involved in some dispute.

Verse 7 *“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding”*—The fullness of God’s grace and the peace that results from that grace cannot be grasped by the mind but must be revealed by the Holy Spirit. (See Ephesians 3:16–19.)

Discuss

1. How did Paul propose that Euodia and Syntyche be reconciled? Paul here gives us a pattern of Christian encouragement.
2. The Lord is near. That’s why Paul encouraged the Philippians to put on certain virtues and act in certain ways. List the things Christians should do in light of the fact that the Lord is near.
3. What did Paul encourage the Philippians to think about? Why?

Apply

4. Agree or disagree: Members of the church will never disagree with one another. Why?
5. What is God’s solution to disagreements among Christians?

Paul encouraged the church to help two women in the congregation not to argue but to work together in service to the Lord. He encouraged the whole congregation to rest in the Lord and live in a spirit of prayer as they went about their day-to-day lives.

Philippians 4:10–23

Joyful thanks for gifts of love

Look

- Verse 10 *“You had no opportunity.”* Perhaps on account of Paul’s tenuous circumstances in Rome or their lack of a candidate to send to Paul or poverty in Philippi, the Philippians were not initially able to aid Paul.
- Verse 20 *“Be glory”*—This is an appropriate way to end any discussion about the Christian faith. The glory for everything that has been accomplished belongs to God.
- Verse 22 *“Those of Caesar’s household”*—Evidently some members of Caesar’s household had come to faith. By exchanging greetings, Paul strengthened Christian fellowship.

Discuss

1. What was Paul’s “secret of facing plenty and hunger” (verse 12)?
2. On Paul’s second missionary journey, he first preached the gospel in Philippi. Then he went to Thessalonica, where he experienced bitter persecution. He then went to Berea, and hostile Jews from Thessalonica pursued him there. Finally, he left for Rome. How had the Philippians helped Paul during this difficult time?
3. Why did Paul value these gifts from the Philippians? (verses 17–18)
4. How would God reward the Philippians’ generosity?

Apply

5. Paul said, “I have *learned* in whatever situation I am to be content” (verse 11, emphasis added). What comfort do we find in this?
6. What do you think is more dangerous to our faith, having too much or too little? Why?

Paul concluded his letter to the Philippians by thanking them for their gifts and, in the process, explaining his contentment in any situation and his joy over the fruits of their faith.