

Introduction

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[0 : 0 0] Now as we begin this evening, as we work through the letter to the Philippians, we have before us a letter which is reckoned to have been written to what was almost certainly Paul's favourite church, if we can put it that way.

You can see from the tone of the letter to the Philippians and the content of it, as you compare it with other letters, there is far more readiness of love, far more easy a relationship with the Philippians than there is with almost anyone else.

It certainly seems to have been the one church which loved him most faithfully and constantly. We know what's up in our studies in Corinthians, for example, the kind of conflict and the turmoil that Paul had had there with the Corinthians, but there's not a hint of that in Philippi.

We read, for example, in chapter 4, as we see here at verse 15, Now ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concern in giving and receiving, but ye only.

They stood out in their love for him and their support of him. But also, this is a letter from a friend to friends.

[1 : 2 2] It is reckoned by some commentators to have been written around AD 63, 64. I don't know how they work out all these dates or how they deduce it, but I'm sure they have scholarly means of doing so.

Paul, remember, is reckoned to have been martyred around the year AD 64. So this means it's been written in the last couple of years of his life.

Not very long before he is thought to have been executed. But although it contains certain farewell elements, it's difficult to decide whether those are actually, you know, a final goodbye or whether they are intended simply as the end of the letter.

In chapter 4, again, you know, from verse 8, That does sound like a sort of goodbye, but it could just be a goodbye at the end of the letter.

But not many people, you know, if, let's say, if I were to die in two years' time, then it would be wrong to read into anything I said this year or now.

[2 : 4 2] Oh yes, he knows he's going to be going in two years. That's why he's saying the things he's saying now. Nobody knows the hour of our departure. And so it's possibly not like to read back too much into something written the year before or even a few months before we actually go.

Unless we've got some kind of lingering, life-threatening illness that gives us fair warning that our time is short. Most of us live as though we still expect it to have plenty of time.

And probably this letter is much the same. It is not, I would suggest to you, primarily a goodbye letter. It is a thank you letter.

That's really what it is about. That's an extended version. I mean, I can just imagine the scenes in our family of children where we're told the right thank you letters of this kind of length after birthdays or Christmases or whatever.

But it is a thank you letter, essentially. And again, we go back to chapter 4 to find the reason for it. At verse 10, I am rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again.

[3 : 47] When you were also careful, but you lacked opportunity. Verse 18, But I have all and abound. I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you.

An odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice, acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all union according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

In other words, they've sent practical help and support to him again. And he's saying, the Lord will bless you for it. He'll make it up to you. Look also, and this won't be immediately apparent to us until we compare it with other letters that he writes.

Look also at the difference in address to the Philippians. Now I'm not suggesting you frantically turn pages here and there and make all sorts of comparisons. But take my word for it here of what you'll find in these particular verses that we'll make reference to here.

You see the contrast here in his address to the Philippians. From a friend to friends. As opposed to almost all his other letters.

[4 : 51] When Paul writes almost all of his other letters, he begins with a statement of his apostleship. In other words, he lays on the line his authority, first of all.

Because in most of the letters he's going to have to write some things which may be a bit tough. May be a bit tough to hear. May not be entirely popular. But he has to begin right at the start with the fact that he, as the apostle of Jesus Christ, has the right and has the authority to say and write whatever he does.

So we have this statement of apostleship. In Romans, chapter 1 verse 1. First Corinthians, second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians.

Not Philippians. But Colossians, not to the Thessalonians. But even to Timothy, first and second. And to Titus, not to Philemon.

But that's a different kind of letter again. So, with the exception of the Thessalonians, everybody else, he begins with the statement of his apostleship, his authority.

[5 : 56] But, when he's writing to the Philippians, he simply writes, Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ. To all the saints in Christ Jesus.

Now, the word servant, as some of you will know, in the Greek, the word doulos, it literally means slave. And there is a difference, of course, between a servant, a hired servant, and a slave.

A servant may be a wage slave, for example, but they have the freedom, theoretically at least, to handle their notice, to resign before and find work elsewhere. That may not be so easy in practice, but it is their legal right.

A servant is free to go. Once they have done their notice, they receive their wages, and are free to go and work somewhere else. A slave is owned completely.

They have no opinion, no thoughts, no rights, in a sense, other than the fact they are owned completely by the master or mistress. They are simply a functioning tool.

[6 : 58] That may sound cruel, but that's what it amounts to. Their purpose is labour. They are an instrument of labour. And therefore, they are owned completely. That won't get too emotional about it.

Slavery was completely, totally a way of life for 18 centuries in our world. And it was so much a part of everyday life, nobody would have given it a second thought.

They would, yes, have thought in terms of how you should treat your slaves, and how you should regard them as fully, you know, human beings and made in the image of God if they were converted, masters or mistresses.

But the idea of saying, oh no, stop having slaves altogether, it would be almost like people saying, nowadays, well, the world is overpopulated, so everybody just stop having children. It's wrong to have children.

Because, you know, it adds to the population and uses up resources and everything. You know how immoral that would be. It's just like an extended family to most people.

[7 : 57] The household slaves had been born in the house. They belonged to the family. They shared in the family's food and home and the family fortunes. If the family did well, the slaves did well too.

If the family went down, the slaves went down with them. They belonged, in a sense. We shouldn't get in our head the idea, you know, the transatlantic slavery from Africa to the Americas and so on.

That awful as it was, that's a different thing here. But what Paul talks about being the slave of Jesus Christ, he means that he belongs body and soul to Christ.

There is a humility here. There is a belonging that he has no thought, save that which is mediated through Christ. All that he acts and does is at the behest of Christ.

He, Paul, no longer does anything himself. He is dead to the old man. He has died to self. He's alive only to Christ. He belongs completely to the master.

[8 : 58] But as well as this kind of debasing of himself before Christ, there is also, with this term servant, a sense in which there is almost a kind of subtle authority in here, in that he is stating almost a sense of continuity between the Lord and the Old Testament, through to the Lord and the New, to Christ.

Servant of the Lord is one of the highest titans that any of the Lord's people could really have. If we think in the book of Joshua, chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses, my servant, is dead.

Now therefore go over this Jordan, thou and all this people unto the land, which I do give to them. Likewise, Joshua himself. Judges, chapter 2, verse 8. Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being 110 years old.

Psalms 89, verse 3. I have made a covenant with my chosen. I have sworn unto David my servant. And again, verse 20. I have found David my servant with my holy oil.

Have I a knight with him? So to be the servant, oblique, slave of Jesus Christ is not simply to empty oneself and say, I don't have a life.

[10 : 26] My life is just Christ. I'm dead. My life is filled with Christ and God. That is all true. But it is also stating that Paul stands in continuity with all the old servants of the Lord from the Old Testament times all the way through to the New.

There is an unbroken continuity of the Lord's servants, such that he is able to write to the Ephesians, for example, chapter 2, verse 20, that we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

The foundation of the apostles and the prophets, the servants of the Lord reaching all the way back. This continuity. Paul and Timotheus, servants of Jesus Christ to all the saints in Christ Jesus.

But just as an aside here, it may be that Thessalonica, to whom he doesn't write the word apostleship or doesn't make this claim, was also perhaps one of the good churches, we might say, that were kind to Paul.

And perhaps that was the case. But if so, then Philippi was even better. Thessalonica is about 80 miles to the west of Philippi, and Paul went there quite soon after he had been to Philippi.

[11 : 57] But we read, going back again to chapter 4, Ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, verse 15 here, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

For even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Now, even in Thessalonica, well, why even Thessalonica? Partly because it's so comparatively close.

I had just left Philippi, Paul might say, when I arrived in Thessalonica, 80 miles or so from the west, and right away you were sending help. Or even if it means Thessalonica, another one of the good churches, when you might have sat in your hands a bit and said, it's okay, Thessalonica, they'll love him, they'll look after him, we can take a breather.

We don't have to be constantly sending help. No, even in Thessalonica, you sent help, you supported me. Once and again, unto my necessity. Philippi loves Paul.

There is no doubt about this. And when we are so loved by somebody, it is very hard not to love them back again, as he undoubtedly loves them.

[13 : 10] Thessalonica is comparatively close. And he goes there quite soon after Philippi. To get the sense of this, we need to turn back to Acts 16 and 17.

So it might be helpful to do that if you have your Bibles in front of you. Acts 16 and 17. You'll notice at the end of chapter 16, when he's been in Philippi, the next stop says, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.

So he stops there next, following Philippi. That's his next main port of call. We might say, how does he come to be in Philippi in the first place?

Well, you've got the Bibles open, hopefully, in Acts 16. You remember the Macedonian call, perhaps, in Acts 16, when Paul has been working his way through Western Asia, what is now Turkey.

In verse 8, we read, they passing by Mysia, Trump came down to Troas. Paul had wanted to go into Bithynia, that's northern Turkey, the bit on the Black Sea coast.

[14 : 19] But he was prevented from doing so. The spirits suffered them not. The Lord obviously wanted them to cross over into Europe. Passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. Troas is on the western coast of what is now Turkey.

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night, which stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed and said, come over into Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

Therefore, loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia. Now, Samothracia is about 80 miles by sea, northwest from Troas.

So we came to that island first, and the next day to Neapolis. Now, I don't know if your Bibles have got maps at the back of them or not, but if you do have maps at the back, it might be helpful.

If you can't, then try and picture a map of Greece in your head. Greece sort of slopes down left to right. It's got this sort of three-fingered peninsula at the bottom end. And if you think up into the top right-hand corner of Greece, again, if you've got maps at the back of the Bible, that will help.

[15 : 28] And there's a sort of clip in the top right-hand corner that looks maybe like three extended fingers, but without wanting to be delicate, it looks for all the world like a kind of distended cow's udder coming to the sideways.

And in the top left-hand corner, the bulb bit of that cow's udder is where Thessalonica is. So you have to pinpoint Thessalonica there.

About 80 miles to the east of that, if you move to the right from the sort of cow's udder coming out sideways there, you see a little round island. That little round island is Thassos.

And Thassos was the place in which the people first came to build Neapolis, where Paul says that he lands in verse 11. Now, Neapolis, the Greek word, means literally new city.

Now, it wasn't a new city when Paul got there. It had been a new city when the people from Thassos landed there and built it 600 years earlier, but it wasn't a new city now. So that's where he landed.

[16 : 31] Now, Thassos, it's about, you know, six or seven miles off the coast of Greece. It's about, if you think in terms of our own situation, it's as though the Shanks were a big, big island.

And people from the Shanks didn't just sort of step across, sail across the melee. They maybe sailed round the corner a bit to roughly about Tarver. That sort of kind of distance from the Shanks to Tarver is about the difference from Thassos to where they built and they began Neapolis.

And that's where they set it up. That's where they began. Neapolis was the port city for Philippi. Why didn't he stop at Neapolis? Why didn't he start preaching the gospel there?

Well, the reason for that is he goes to Philippi because Philippi is strategic. It was built on an ancient site, a very ancient city with a good water supply.

And then about 300-odd BC thereabouts, Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, took it over and rebuilt it and called it after himself.

[17 : 33] Hence, Philippi, after King Philip of Macedon. And the reason he built there is because not only was there a good water supply, but all the roads from the different areas converged there.

If you want to control the trade routes, you plonk yourself right where they converge. And there was a road running to the east, a great big mountain pass that would block off the sort of road to Turkey and to Asia.

But just about that point, there was a dip in the mountain pass where the road would have to go through. So if you're going to get through those mountains at all, you control the road that goes through them.

That's why they built Philippi where they did. It is strategic. It's not just about its geographical location. It's about being the hub of a wheel from which all the different spokes come out.

That's often the method that Paul followed. It's like if you wanted to spread a message in the west of central Scotland and you're sailing up the cliff, chugging along, and you get off at Port Glasgow, you wouldn't say, oh, here I am, Port Glasgow, right, I'm going to start proclaiming this message.

[18 : 40] No, you carry on up by land to Glasgow itself. And from Glasgow, a big centre of population, then you'd spread your message out. Port Glasgow is to Glasgow.

What Leith is to Edinburgh? What Austria is to Rome? What Neapolis is to Philippi? It is the port city. It is the entranceway, but it is not the main hub.

Philippi is the main hub. As it's written, Acts 16, verse 12, from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony.

Now, what does that mean, a colony? What that means is that when the Romans came in and fought a battle quite near Philippi in the first century, what they then did was, just as Philip of Macedonia had recognised its strategic importance, the Romans then claimed it for themselves and made a colony.

That means that they used, when they established colonies, they would take roughly about 300 ex-soldiers, soldiers who had served their 25 years or whatever in the forces, in the legions, and they would then confer citizenship on them.

[19 : 51] They'd get them to take their wives and their families and their household, and they'd plonk them down in this new place. And they would be responsible for building it up and romanising it.

They would have the privileges, they would have the right to rule, they would be able to set up their Roman theatres, their Roman governments, their Roman procedures, everything. The distinction about a colony was that as the first 300, as it were, ex-legionaries would then grow and expand, and their families would then be born there and marry and so on, they would expand the Roman population.

And the colony was distinctively a tiny little fragment of Rome set where it was throughout the empire, wherever it happened to be, it had the same privileges, it had the same organisation, it was Rome in miniature.

And this is part of the distinction also about Philippi, where you see in Acts 16, at verse 21, when the masters of the demon-possessed girl are trying to oppress Paul and Silas, they say, they teach us, these men which are Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe being Romans.

We are a Roman city, we are a Roman colony, we love our Roman laws, these are Jews, foreigners, they have no business here, they're just causing trouble. And so they focus upon the patriotic desire to be truly Roman, a colony.

[21 : 21] All of these things, we mention not just to fill in background, but because they are important, they are part of the reason why Paul doesn't just stop at Samothracea, he doesn't just stop at Neapolis, well here we are in the Greek mainland now, this is us in Europe, let's start proclaiming the gospel.

No, he goes inland to Philippi, to the hub of the wheel, and from there, having planted the gospel, then the spokes will begin to spread, and all the different roads and routes, as the message is spread, it will go along those routes, those veins and arteries, and it will spread the message.

This is why he chooses Philippi. And as we will see as well, being a Roman colony, Paul being a Roman citizen, has certain privileges, which he is then able to utilise for the gospel purpose.

And we'll come back to that. But when he moves on from Philippi, at the end of Acts 16, as we said, it's about 80 miles west to Thessalonica.

And Thessalonica, the Acts 17, verses 1 to 9, from there, after the persecution arises, he moves to Berea. That's about 40 miles west. The city is still there, it's called something different now.

[22 : 38] 40 miles west to Berea, Acts 17, verses 10 to 30. Berea is not a strategic city. It's not a hub. He's gone there to escape from the others.

And when the persecution arises there again, they don't just flee into the mountains or go further into the wilderness. We read there, rather, that when this arises, when the Jews of Thessalonica, verse 13 of Acts 17, had knowledge that the word of God was preached upon Berea, they came further also and stirred up the people.

And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go, as it were, to the sea. But Silas and Timotheus are bored there still. They that conducted Paul brought him on to Athens.

There it is in a verse and a half, as though it's just sort of next door. From Berea, which is not on the coast, how do you get to the coast? Well, the fact is, not far from Berea, there is a sort of winding, twisting river that would take you about 25 miles downstream to the coast where Paul would go.

They would almost certainly put him in a little boat with whoever it was. They'd sail downstream to the coast where they would get a ship. Once you're at the coast after the 25 miles downstream, it's a good 300 miles by sea.

[23 : 57] South-east, from the top left-hand corner of Greece there, all the way down, down to the islands there in the bottom right-hand corner, then round the corner and along the bottom and then land at Athens.

He's missed out most of Greece. He's not going through the whole of Greece proclaiming the gospel as he goes to every little hamlet and village and so on. No. This is an express train rather than a little bus that stops at every village and rock and bus stop.

This is a message which, having gone from one centre in the north, is now going straight to the capital, straight to Athens itself, another strategic hub where Paul then goes.

Acts 17, the latter part of it is all about his time and then we read from there he moves 50 miles west to Corinth, another strategic hub.

Corinth, right on the tiny little narrow isthmus that separates the lower part of Greece, Achaia, from the northern part, mainland Greece and because it's such a tiny narrow isthmus then Corinth became a major port because you sail up the comparatively calm waters of the inland sort of peninsula there.

[25 : 09] You drag your boat or else you transport your goods across the narrow lake of land and out the other side saves you hundreds of miles of sea-going voyage in the wide open sea, danger, exposure to storms and all the rest of it.

So Corinth, again, controlled the trade. Hugely rich city, hugely strategic point. He is travelling to these major strategic hubs.

About 300 miles by sea to Athens, about 50 miles then west to Corinth. Now Corinth, we know he had his problems in. But in Corinth, we read, he wrote to the 2 Corinthians chapter 11 where he is protesting about how he never took a penny off them.

We read in chapter 11 verses 79. Have I committed an offence in a base in myself that you might be exalted because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? I robbed other churches taking wages of them to do you service.

In other words, other churches supplied my needs. I'm going to take everything off you, Corinthians. And when I was present with you and wanted, in other words, was in need, I was chargeable to no man.

[26 : 22] For that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied. Macedonia, northern Greece. And in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you and so will I keep myself.

The brethren from Macedonia supplied. Now, Macedonia is a big place, northern Greece, huge number of cities, huge number of population, except, remember what we read, the end of Philippians, verse 15 of chapter 4.

You Philippians know also, In the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning, giving, and receiving, but ye only.

So when he says to the Corinthians, the brethren that came from Macedonia supplied my needs, what he means is Philippi. He's not pushing one senior, one church over against another, but he is saying, look, I didn't take anything off you, other people supplied it, but he really means Philippi, because he says to the Philippians, nobody else helped me, just you.

So that means the Philippians have been supplying his need, not only when he first goes to Thessalonica, not only when he goes to Berea, but once he comes down to Athens, or once he goes to Corinth, and he's there for, was it two and a half years or something, he's there in Corinth, and all that time to help, the sustenance, as well as working with Aquila and Priscilla as a tent maker, and so on, any extra help he gets, it comes from Philippi.

[27 : 56] They keep supporting him, they keep upholding him, they keep providing for its needs, and now here at Rome, where he is a prisoner, we read that they are still sending help and support in him.

Verse 10 of chapter 4, But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again, wherein he were also careful, but he lacked opportunity.

But I have all, verse 18, and abound, and full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice, acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

Now it doesn't mean they sent him shower gel and soap and all the rest, but well-pleasing, it means they sent him perhaps clothing, perhaps food, certainly it would mean money.

They had sent him money to enable him to carry on his work, even as a prisoner in Rome. They are not ashamed of him, they do not back off from him, they continue to keep supporting him again and again and again.

[29 : 01] Now money is not everything, of course, but because it is a finite resource, it means that to give it to someone is to part with it oneself.

If I come down at the pulpit and I give you ten pounds, then you might say, oh thank you very much, that's very nice, but if you now have the ten pounds, there's still ten pounds in the church as there was before, but now you have it and because you have it, I don't have it and that's what happens now when we give somebody money, they are that, let's say, ten pounds richer and the ten pounds poorer, so it's a finite resource, if it goes to one person, it comes from somebody else, you think, well, James, we know that, yeah, but we don't always think about that, that in order to enrich somebody with a gift, somebody else consents to become that much financially poorer, so it represents not only the enriching of the recipient, but the giver taking a voluntary hit, as it were, because of their love for the person and or for the Lord, so it means, first of all, thinking of them, you're not going to just throw money away, well, they know, but you'll give it specifically to somebody who's either need you recognise or cause they are working for that you think is worthy and worthwhile, it means you're thinking, it means you're recognising they're engaged in something that you want to support, so you're thinking first, you're thinking and then you're giving and the giving means that you're caring and if you are caring then as a Christian almost certainly you will be praying for them as well, you see, there's so much more involved in the simple fact of giving than just handing over the money, because you are that much more made poorer as they are that much more made richer, whether it's a missionary or the church itself or some other aspect of the Lord's cause, we consent to become a wee bit poorer so that they become a wee bit better off and can carry on the work that the Lord has called them to.

When we do that it means we're thinking about what they are doing, it means we're thinking about the cause they are serving, it means that yes, we agree with that cause, we support that cause, so we'll pray for that cause as well and because we love the person concerned we want them to know that they are cared for.

You see what I mean? It's not just about money, not just about changing a box or a pound note or whatever, it's a whole self that's involved in the game and Paul recognises this, this is what's coming from Philippi, the love that is coming from them constantly encourages and strengthens his soul.

Now we mentioned that Philippi is strategic as being a colony, it's intensely proud of its Roman status and we saw that with Acts 16, how they're complaining that these men who are Jews have come and taught us customs and it's not awful for us as Romans to do.

[32 : 12] As we look at Philippi and Paul is there, stay with me in Acts 16 here, we came to the city of hiding certain days, verse 13, on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside where prayer was wont to be made and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

Two things we notice there, first of all, it's women, secondly, the place of prayer is beside the river, what is missing? Where does Paul normally go when he goes into Iconium, when he goes into Antioch, when he goes almost everywhere, when he goes to Thessalonica even?

He goes straight to the synagogue. But there's no synagogue in Philippi. Now in order to establish a synagogue, you needed a minimum of ten Jewish men.

It's not enough if you've got a hundred Jewish women, you've got to have ten Jewish men to establish a synagogue. That means there aren't ten Jewish men in Philippi.

There may be half a dozen or maybe seven or eight but there aren't ten. There may be umpteen women but there aren't ten men. That means the Jewish presence in Philippi is tiny, is fragile and it also means this is an overwhelmingly Gentile city.

[33 : 32] It's Greek, it's a Roman colony, it is Gentile through and through. There aren't enough Jews to make a synagogue. So Paul goes and speaks to the women there that are gathering.

And this is where of course we find Lydia. A certain woman, verse 14, named Lydia, seller of purple of the city of Thyatira which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Now, Thyatira of course is in western Asia which is now western and it's one of the seven churches that John the Apostle likes to do in Revelation. And if Lydia is coming from there, it might simply mean a woman from Lydia, the area, but that's her name given as we have it.

So, if she's dealing in purple, purple was an extremely expensive commodity. One of the most expensive you could possibly trade in.

Purple dye was obtained from a particular little shellfish which you opened up the shell, you took the wee shellfish inside and there was a little squirt of ink from this tiny little shellfish.

[34 : 41] One little squirt of purple dye out of one shellfish. So, in order to dye an entire garment, you've got to get hundreds of these exclusive little shellfish in order to catch them, especially extract the ink and so on.

It's hugely expensive and it's a great rarity. It's because purple was so expensive that it tended to be the colour of royalty because only royal families, only kings and emperors could afford it.

And she deals in purple. That means she's rich. That means either she is a strong businesswoman in her own right or else she is widowed from a strong commercially trading Roman citizen commercial guy who ran his own purple business or she's widowed from that and now she's running the business.

Either way, she's got her own house, she's a traitor in purple and she warns immediately to Paul and to the message of the gospel. And she it is who says, if you have counted me faithful, then come and stay in my house and come to my house and abide you and she constrained us.

The other thing we would like from this is that Paul doesn't then say, oh well, Lydia's having us to stay at a nice big house, we can have worship meetings here, we can gather the church here, all those who want to believe, all our house is believing, so that's good, they all want to believe in the gospel.

[36 : 11] She then, she besought us saying, if you judge me faithful, she attended the things that were spoken of Paul, come into my house, abide there, that would imply that she herself was converted, whose heart the Lord opened, she attended to the things spoken of Paul.

Paul doesn't say, come on, let's all gather in Lydia's house, let's have our worship meetings there. No, they keep on going to the place of prayer because they want a public arena, they want the message to get out there, not just to be gathered in.

And this is underlined by the fact that we read at verse 16 in Acts 16, it came to pass as we went to prayer, going to the place of prayer, by the riverside again, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination metas, which brought her masters much gain by soothsay.

This girl is possessed by an evil spirit, which is able to see things that ordinary people are not able to see. This demon-possessed girl makes money for her masters, a poor, unfortunate soul who is demon-possessed and her masters have latched onto this, they get where they prophesy, they say things that people get spooked by, they pay their money, they make money out of her, effectively trafficking a slave girl in this way.

Now notice that she follows Paul and Silas and cried saying, these men are the servants of the most high God which show unto us the way of salvation. This could have caused quite a stutter from Philippi, but notice the masters don't mind this.

[37 : 41] They're not saying don't go talking that Jewish nonsense, don't go speaking that gospel of Jesus of Nazareth, we don't want any of people, they're quite happy, no such thing as bad publicity. Keep it coming, keep the noise going, makes people sit up and take notice, makes people listen, draws people in, what's this girl saying, let's hear some more, here's some money, it's good for business, keeps attracting attention, strangers in town, new message, girl proclaiming it, that's fine, keep it coming, good publicity, keep it going.

They don't mind the message that she's saying, it's still good for business. But the minute Paul turns round, she did this many days, Paul being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her, and he came out to say, now.

And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the marketplace under the rulers, and brought them to the magistrate, saying, these men being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city.

It is only when the money stops flowing that these men now have a problem. The girl was making money for them, and now they're matching on a Paul and Silas, in the same way as say, a modern trafficking person might come down like a ton of bricks on somebody who might mistreat a girl that they were trafficking, if they say, broke an arm or a leg or wounded her face or something, not because they care about the girl, but if she's got a broken arm or leg, she can't be scrubbing floors or working as a domestic slave anymore, it's costing them money.

If he smashes up her face because he ill treats her, then she's not pretty anymore, nobody else is going to want to hire her services, they're losing money. So they're going to come down like a ton of bricks on anybody that costs them their property.

[39 : 31] And this is what's happening here. They don't care about the slave girl, they don't care about the message she was proclaiming, they care about the money. And that's why they're attacking Paul and Silas now.

Now we see here that the lies that are spoken about them. These men teach us customs which are not lawful for us to see rather than to observe the Romans, that's not true. It's true that they are Jews, Paul and Silas are both Jews, and this then is stirring up what can only be anti-Semitism, anti-Jewishness, in a city where there's a few Jews, but not enough to really represent any kind of threat.

It's okay to hate them because they're not a doger. It's okay to stir up public hatred against them because they're not enough of a big minority. You see, it might be okay for somebody to be of a racist mentality if, say, they live in a place that's overwhelmingly quite, hardly any black people, hardly any Asians in it, it's okay then.

You know, nobody's going to give you too much of a hard time for being racist. But if you decide to be racist in a huge place that's got huge numbers of immigrants of those of ethnic minority, you're going to have trouble if you start saying, hey, yeah, it's okay to say these people are bad.

The Jews in Philippi are a tiny minority, not enough to make a synagogue. And the Romans whip up the hatred against the Jews, and so the multitude goes up together against them.

[40 : 55] The magistrates don't bother to have a trial, don't bother to have any kind of investigation, rent off their clothes, commanded to beat them, and when they had laid many strikes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely.

In other words, the magistrates are terrified of the mob, and they want to satiate the mob's bloodlust. Those who are meant to be upholding the law end up forgetting about the law in order to keep the mob happy.

Don't pretend that doesn't happen nowadays. Only recently we've had the Asher's Bakery case in Ireland, where you've got a situation where something that is against the law in that part of the country, people are prosecuted for refusing to make a slogan supporting something that is against the law.

And that which is the forces of law prosecute them for doing it. Now, only in some kind of topsy-turvy Alice in Wonderland situation could the law ever be used to prosecute somebody for refusing to promote something that's against the law.

But, in this world, in this day and age, that happens. And in Philippi, in that day and age, it happened too. Now, Paul and Silas then get possibly scourged, probably not to the same extent that Jesus was before crucifixion, but similarly savage.

[42 : 22] the Roman scourging was a brutal affair and once many stripes had been laid on them, they would be really suffering, bleeding heavily, and in major difficulties.

So then they're thrown into the inner dungeon, inner prison, windowless situation, feet in the stocks, and then they're singing hymns at midnight. And then, the next day, having satisfied the bloodlust of the mob, verse 35, the magistrate sent the sergeant saying, let those men go.

Now, if they haven't done anything, if they are guilty, why are you letting them go? If they've done something horrendous, you should be punishing them and imprisoning them for longer. If they're innocent, why do you flog them in the first place?

Well, remember, this is just like what Pilate did with Jesus, where after, you know, he scourged him and then he brought him forth to the mob and he said, look, I'm bringing him out so that you can see I find no fault in them.

That's after he had scourged him, after they crowned him with thorns, after they'd beaten him up, after they put the purple robe on him, I bring him forth here that you may know that I find no fault in him.

[43 : 28] That's what Pilate said. This is how they treat an innocent man in order to placate the mob. That's what Pilate does. That's what the magistrates in Philippi do.

This then begs the question, and this I think is probably the key question here, as to why if Paul then later on says, wait a minute, we're not going anywhere.

We're Roman citizens and they have just flogged us without any investigation, without any court procedure, without any condemnation, and they have flogged us uncondemned and cast a signal for us.

Now they want us to go quiet, not a chance. Get them to come here and ask us to come out. Get them to come here and apologise. The sergeants told these words to the magistrates and they feared when they heard that they were Romans and they came and besought them and brought them out and desired them to depart out of their safety.

Which begs the question, why doesn't Paul say anything before? Why at verse 21 and 22 when they're busy ripping off their clothes and about to flog them half to death, why do they say, stop, stop, we're Roman citizens.

[44 : 33] You can't flog us to death. You can't just whip us like this. We're Roman citizens. That would have counted. The whole reason they're being flogged is because they're so proud of their Roman citizenship and they don't want all this Jewish nonsense.

So they could have stopped it. Why doesn't he do it? Why doesn't he speak out of you? I would suggest to you that he knows exactly what he's doing.

You don't go through that kind of flogging by accident. He knows that with every strike they are laying on him, they are digging their own graves.

He is giving them enough rope to be able to do this atrocity against Roman citizens and now, don't wonder they're singing at midnight in the prison.

He's got them exactly where he wants them. All it takes is one letter to Rome and these guys are for a high jump. They have taken Roman citizens and flogged them half to death without even raising an inquiry.

[45 : 38] Now they're in trouble and Paul knows exactly what he's doing. Having now put them on the back foot, it means the magistrates will be trembling before they ever hassle the fledgling Christian church, before they ever arrest or flog any more Jews or Christians.

They will not touch the Philippian church now, knowing that their leaders are Roman citizens, that their own people are led by those who could make trouble for the Philippian magistrates at the drop of a hat.

They are effectively secure now. Philippi is probably the safest church in the entire Roman world because the magistrates now are terrified.

And that doesn't end the minute Paul walks out the door. He's got this over them. And for as long as Paul is alive, Philippi has to tread on eggshells and the church will be left in peace.

I would suggest to you that is why he takes this flogging. Knowing with every stroke that they are digging their own graves, knowing that every drop of Roman citizen blood that is shed secures the safety of the Philippian church.

[47 : 03] He absorbs this pain and this shame and this brutality. He lets them do it because, not these some kind of masochists, but because it strengthens the gospel.

It secures the safety of the Philippian church. The magistrates will not dare now to attack these people.

Will not dare to give them any more grief. So I want us to stop and think and ask, is this perhaps one reason why the Philippian church loved Paul so much?

He had seen what he was prepared to endure to protect them. It would have been the easiest thing in the world to save his own skin just when he's being tied up to the position.

He says, actually, you realise we're Roman citizens. You lay a finger and ask, boy, are you in trouble? No, he didn't do that. He didn't save his own skin. He could have so easily, but he chose instead to suffer in order to safeguard that.

[48 : 09] Perhaps, indeed, he has the right to say that which sounds so otherwise big-headed. You know, at the end of chapter 4, he says, those things which you have both heard and seen and received and heard and seen in me do, and the God of peace shall be with you.

Verse 9 of chapter 4. So, he can say that because he has set up the example. And when he writes to the Thessalonians, you know, even after that we had suffered before and were shamefully intrigued, as you know at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

Philippi, they were flogged, but that's the only time. It didn't happen again. They chose to suffer themselves, Paul and Silas. They chose to safeguard, literally with their own blood, the safety and protection of the Philippian church.

Now, the only other recorded visit to Philippi is in Acts 20 verse 6, which is almost certainly the goodbye visit, the same chapter in which he takes his leave of the Ephesian elders and so on on the beach.

He doesn't expect to return. But the letter is after that. It's later. from that goodbye to the Ephesian elders and that Passover visit to Philippi. And it is likely after his first release and it's now his second imprisonment.

[49 : 31] It is full of love. You read these first 11 verses and you see the love just pouring out of it. And if you can focus just especially in verse 6, say, being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun the good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Well, look again at these opening verses, Lord willing, next Lord's Day and see the love and the power that pours out of them. But we see first of all now where Philippi is, why Paul went there, why perhaps they loved him so much and all that he endured in order to safeguard the gospel there amongst them.

God bless. And this. Thank you. Always. ■ and.