

# HOLDING FAST TO OUR HEAD

*PAUL'S LETTER TO THE SAINTS  
IN PHILIPPI AND COLOSSAE*

**By Frank Jamerson**

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*Spiritual "equipment" for the contest of life.*

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**Lesson 1**  
Philippians 1:1-11

**Introduction:**

A. “In 356 B.C., King Philip of Macedonia (the father of Alexander the Great) took this town and expanded it, renaming it Philippi. The Romans captured it in 168 B.C.... Octavian turned Philippi into a Roman colony (cf. Acts 16:12) and military outpost. The citizens of this colony were regarded as citizens of Rome and given a number of special privileges. Because Philippi was a military city and not a commercial center, there were not enough Jews for a synagogue when Paul came, Acts 16:13” (Introduction in **The Open Bible**).

B. Paul’s first visit to the city, on his second missionary journey (c. 52 A.D.), resulted in the conversion of Lydia and her household (Acts 16:11-15) and the jailor and his household, 16:25-40. About five years later, he again visited the city, Acts 19:21, 22; 20:6.

C. The book was written from prison in Rome, about 62 A.D. (His reference to “the whole palace guard,” and saints “in Caesar’s household” are strong internal evidences for this conclusion, Philippians 1:12-14; 4:22.)

D. The book was written out of concern for the spiritual welfare of the church. “There were both internal and external threats to the church’s unity...Internally there were signs of ‘grumbling’ and ‘questioning’ among them (2:14), and there were differences between two prominent sisters in the church that needed serious attention, 4:2...The external threat to the unity of the church was twofold: (1) the pagan society around them (idol-worshippers) who would tempt them to *compromise their faith* (1:27-30), and (2) the evil workers (Judaizers) who were close at hand (but not yet in the church) and would attempt to *seduce them away from the faith* to ‘another gospel,’ 3:1ff. The Philippians must unitedly ‘stand fast’ for the gospel against the one and ‘watch out for’ the other” (**Truth Commentary**, Walton Weaver).

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### **Discussion:**

#### A. The salutation, 1:1, 2.

1. The epistle is addressed to all the saints in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.
  - a. The church had bishops (*episkopos* – bishop, overseer; *poimen* - pastor, shepherd; *presbyteros* – elder, presbyter), cf. Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1- 4. (Note: 1 Peter 5 uses all three words: *elders*, verse 1, *shepherd and overseers*, verse 2.)
  - b. Deacons (*diakonois* – special servants of the church), 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
2. With this organization they (a) supported preachers (Philippians 1:12-14; 4:15-22) and (b) provided relief for needy saints, Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

#### B. Paul's thanksgiving for them, 1:3-7.

1. The words joy and rejoice are found eighteen times in the letter.
2. From the beginning of the church in Philippi, they had shown kindness to Paul, Acts 16:15. They had sent aid more than once when he was still in Thessalonica, Philippians 4:15. (Note: This necessarily implies a church treasury, although it is not specifically mentioned.)
3. The good work God began through the Philippians (1:5, 6), He would bring to fruition at the coming of Christ, 1:10; 2:12, 13.
4. By their support, the Philippians had fellowshipped Paul in his work, even in prison.

#### C. Paul's entreaty for them, 1:8-11.

1. Spiritual growth is impossible without love, 1 Corinthians 13:1-4; 1 John 5:1-4.
2. Love must be directed by *knowledge*. *Discernment* is intelligent application of the knowledge – sound judgment.
3. “Approve the things that are excellent” (distinguish the things that differ). We must first prove things are right (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Corinthians 13:5) and then be able to approve those things based upon their superior quality.
4. To be *sincere* “signifies unalloyed, pure...Some regard the etymological meaning as ‘tested by the sunlight’” (W. E. Vine).
5. To live *without offense* is to live so as not to cause others to stumble, 1 Corinthians 10:32. This is the fruit that righteousness produces and which glorifies God.

**NOTES AND / OR QUESTIONS**

**STUDY QUESTIONS:**

1. Who named the city of Philippi?
2. Why did Paul go to a riverside instead of a synagogue in Philippi?
3. What two households were the first converts in Philippi?
4. What is the internal proof that the book was written from prison in Rome?
5. What were some internal problems in the church at Philippi?
6. What external influences threatened them?
7. Prove that bishops, pastors, and elders are the same work.

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8. How did Philippi do missionary work in other areas?
  
9. What other work did they help in other areas?
  
10. Why did Paul remember them in his prayers?
  
11. Who began and completed the work in them?
  
12. How is love directed?
  
13. What is the difference between knowledge and discernment?
  
14. What does it mean to live without offense?