**Introduction to Philippians – PH01-01**

This is the first session of a new study. This is introduction to the book of Philippians. The first verse of the book of Philippians says, “Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the bishops and the deacons.” It is our hope that the study in the book of Philippians will prove to be one of your finest hours in the Word of God.

This book is one of the most personal and intimate of Paul’s letters to the believers of the New Testament churches. This is a book that reflects a certain joy and a certain exuberance and a sense of well-being—a book which deals with the secret of inner happiness which is particularly striking since Paul wrote the book from prison during the period of his first imprisonment in the city of Rome.

The Philippian church was a church that delighted the heart of the apostle Paul because it was such a stable group of believers. It was a well-organized church with its pastor-teacher leadership and with its working board of deacons. It was a church that was responsive to the Word of God. It was responsive to the instruction which it was receiving. It was not a church free of troubles, and we shall see that we’ll touch upon some of Paul’s admonitions to some of the people in the church to get their squabbles straightened out and to get their relationships in the right order, but on the whole, this was a church that he loved. So from the prison in Rome, he delighted to write this which was one of four epistles (this probably the last of the four) that he wrote there.

I’m going to try to spend a little time, and maybe next time, in explaining to you how we receive from the Word of God the information that God has prepared—the information that keeps us from being spiritual fools; the information that keeps you from being conned by some nice Christian who is negative and who is resisting, but who may bear some weight of influence in your life, that if you understood the Word of God you would not lest that person bear that weight of influence; how we can come to the place where no matter what hell and high water is raging around us outside, we are within in a state of millennium.

Few Christians have arrived at that point. It’s because of the breakdown of the work within the ministry and of the alerting to Christian people of what their primary responsibility in life is, and that is to get themselves filled with a knowledge and an understanding of God’s viewpoint; to take care of that spiritual deficiency … that we are all plagued by, and which until we solve, we are pathetic creatures moving through life. We will not be stable nor will we be prepared for anything. Yet God says, “I have always been happy.” God has never been unhappy. He never will be unhappy. And God says, “What I want for you is to share my joy.”

Do you realize what that means? God says, “I want you to have not one moment where you do not experience happiness; where you are not entering into my infinite happiness.” Now those are not just words. This is what God says is in His plan for you. If you are not in that plan, it is because you are not functioning under the methods that He has provided for you to enter into that happiness. So this should be a great book because this book has a great deal to say about how we enter into what God has prepared for us.

**The Allegorical Method of Interpretation**

There are some methods of interpreting the Word of God, and that’s what it all comes down to. We’re going to spend our time interpreting this book and explaining it so that you will understand it and be able to enter into it. There are some false methods of explaining the Word of God which we should mention. One is called the allegorical method. This is where people read the Bible and say, “Now under the literal words there is a hidden meaning. And I’m going to look to see if I can find that hidden meaning.” The imagination just breaks loose. This is the favorite kind of preaching of the minister who does not prepare himself to get up in the pulpit to speak to the people. Instead he gets up and he’s going to talk to you from his heart, which means he’s going to talk to you from his empty head. He doesn’t have to think of anything. He can just read the Scripture and then he can just start imagining here and imagining there and imagining here, and sometimes he can be very impressive, if he’s good with words, and you’ll go out and say, “Now that was really something.” But you got nothing for what was such a “something.” The allegorical method is a disastrous area in the treatment of the Word of God.

**The Mystical Method of Interpretation**

A second method is called the mystical method. This is again where you take the literal Scripture and then you look for an inner light to lead you to its significance. You just have some feeling about this. You just feel that this is what this must mean. Now you can always spot a Sunday School teacher who doesn’t know up from down by the fact that he will run a class and he will read a Scripture and he will say, “Alright, now, Mr. Jones, what do you feel that means?” And Mr. Jones will share his ignorance about what he feels that means. Then he’ll ask Mr. Smith for the sharing of his ignorance. And pretty soon everybody has shared their ignorance of their feelings because our feelings have no content. They have no direction. They have no understanding. Only our minds can have understanding and thereby direct our feelings. You should be able to spot when somebody is shelling out to you devotional inspirational gaff and telling you this is going to advance you spiritually, because it will not.

This is tricky because the person stands up before you and you look at him and you know what his theological position is. He is just as sound as could be in his theology. He stands up and he reads the Bible to you. He is actually reading verses out of the Word of God to you. Here’s the Word of God coming to me. If you listen carefully and are alerted to this, after a while you will discover, “You know, he’s not explaining that Scripture at all. He’s just talking to me. He’s just inspiring me. But he is not telling me what God thinks so when I leave here I will know everything that that preacher thinks and what moves his emotions, but I won’t know a thing about what God thinks and what God wants me to know to move my emotions in His way. The mystical method is not God’s way of interpreting the Word.

**The Rational Method of Interpretation**

Another method is rationalistic—reasoning. What do you think this reasonably means. If the Bible says like in the book of Revelation, you say, “Now that book is unreasonable. Do you realize what the book of Revelation says? The book of Revelation says that every effort of human governments is going to come to disaster. Every effort of the United States to improve its position on the world scene is headed for disappointment. Every effort of the United States to solve its social problems is doomed. Every effort to improve our society and to reverse the trends toward evil is hopeless.

The rationalist says, “Oh that is so pessimistic. I just can’t believe that. I like to be more optimistic.” And when the optimist tells me that, I like to remind him that there have been something like 20 or 30 generations who preceded him, who came along with the same optimistic drives and said, “Now we are going to solve the disastrous directions of our society,” only to find they’re repeating efforts that have long since been tried and discarded. Rationalism will not lead you to the knowledge of the mind of God. It will be ready to reject what God has to say.

**Neo-orthodoxy**

Then there is neo-orthodoxy that we’ve already studied which says that the truth is what I see it to be at the moment—how it strikes me. So the Bible may tell me something or it may not. It depends upon how it strikes me.

**The Historical Grammatical Method of Interpretation**

Now there is a true method of interpretation. This is what you should be looking for when you go to church. When you attend church you should understand that God has a method for explaining His Word. You don’t have to sit in very many services before you can spot and say, “Listen, this gentleman is not using this scriptural method for explaining the Word of God. He’s playing me for a do-do bird by what he’s doing. Learn the method. Then you will be able to spot the people who are conning you into thinking that you have been brought into a contact with the mind of God and have been brought into a spiritual experience and you’ve gotten exactly nothing. If you think you have something spiritually and start living on that, you are headed for some disasters in your life.

The method that God has is sometimes called the historical grammatical method of interpretation. In the New Testament church, this was the method of interpreting the Scriptures. It fell into disuse and was revived during the reformation when the reformers insisted on returning to the authority of the Bible in all things relative to faith and practice. The historical grammatical method has certain characteristics. One of them is that it deals with the meaning of words. It deals with the meaning of the Greek and Hebrew words in the normal sense in which those words were used. It does not put into them certain figurative connotations. This is often done with the Bible. The amillennialist rejects the book of the Revelation because he says it’s unreasonable what that book says is going to happen to this earth. Therefore he spiritualizes it. He makes it figurative.

For example, I had a professor in the Bible department in college who said, “Now when the book of the Revelation says that Christ is going to return and we are going to reign with him for 1,000 years on this earth, that doesn’t mean 1,000 actual years. That just means a long period of time, like you say, ‘Oh, I’ve got so much to do, it will take me a million years to get this done.’ You don’t mean a million years.” Now on what basis did he have a right to say that 1,000 years does not mean 1,000 years? No basis at all, except that he rejected the biblical method of interpreting the Word of God which is the historical grammatical method.

So this method deals with individual words and what they mean. Do you see a problem arising here already? We’re not talking about the words in the English Bible. When we study the book of Philippians, we have to know what the words in the Greek Bible mean because that’s what the Holy Spirit wrote it in. If you are going to understand your English Bible, somebody has to take these Greek words for you, out of which we draw the English translation, and say, “Here’s what they mean.” We can’t give you just an English word that fully connotes the meaning of a certain Greek word. Unless you know what that original is, you don’t know what the Bible says at all. That’s why the average Christian knows so little about the Bible, and why when he comes to crises he can’t meet the crises in life.

Somebody had a problem the other day. It was a real problem. And what was the first thing they said? “Oh, will you come over and pray with me?” Well, I don’t mind praying with people, but I don’t like to pray with people who haven’t been around in church studying the Word of God. I notice that the people who don’t come to church are the first ones to call me when they’re in trouble and say, “Will you come over and pray with me?” Or, “Will you come over and counsel with me?” Well, what in the world do you think I’m doing Sunday after Sunday … except counseling you? I’m giving you the answer to things now out of the Word of God, before you ever get to them.

If you come along and you’ve got a problem in your life, or somebody comes along and throws you a curve that you can’t handle, figuratively or literally, and then you wonder what’s wrong with me, the answer is that you haven’t prepared in the Word of God. That’s what’s wrong with you. You’re not going to be prepared. You’re not going to be able to go to somebody and say, “Counsel me.” If anybody sits down and says, “Yes, I’ll tell you brother; here is this verse here; that will give you the answer,” you’re a fool if you believe that.” Anybody who knows anything will know that the answers to most of your problems are probably going to take a handful of tapes and say, “Here. These discuss this issue. Listen to these and maybe you’ll understand where you went wrong.”

We have to bring together the fact that God says, “I want you to be happy.” And over here you say, “I’m not happy.” Now is God wrong? Has He failed in His goal? Not at all. You study the Word of God and you’re still not happy. There is something missing in the connecting link, and that’s what explaining what pastor-teacher business is all about, to bring you to the point where you are what God has planned for you. You cannot do that when you get in trouble.

So don’t come looking for answers when you’re in trouble, when you’ve been too busy and too preoccupied and too big and too self-confident to be able to be here in such a simple little thing as spending a little time, like an hour at a time, in the study of the Word of God. If you do that, over a period of time, you will be prepared. You have a spiritual deficiency. With that spiritual deficiency within your being there is no way that you can meet your problems until that deficiency is filled. You will not meet that deficiency overnight. That takes a period of time to do.

**Exegesis**

So we are concerned with the meaning of words in the historical grammatical technique. We are also interested in interpreting the grammar. We want to know what the Greek grammar tells us about the meaning of these words that have been written. This is called “exegesis.” That’s what the pastor-teacher is trying to do. He takes a passage of Scripture and he’s trying to “exegete” it; to explain it to you; to tell you on the basis of the original language as the grammatical forms reveal the meanings that are involved in what the Holy Spirit had the writer put down. Unless you do it this way, to find the relationship between words, you will not understand what the text is saying.

**Isagogics**

Then this method also brings the background of Scripture into the picture. That’s what we mean by “historical.” This brings into the picture the customs when this book was written, such as the book of Philippians. What was the history? For example, what kind of a town was Philippi? It’s important that we know what kind of town Philippi was in order to understand some of the things that Paul is going to say in this book? What kind of a church was Philippi? What was the condition of the Empire at that time? What was the geographic location? These are all the background factors upon which this book was written. We have to know that to understand what was in the writer’s mind. This is called “isagogics.” Isagogics simply means the background of the writing at the time that it was written.

**Hermeneutics**

Then this method also involves certain rules of interpretation. That’s called hermeneutics. Hermeneutics are rules, or sometimes they’re called axioms—self-evident axioms. We’re going to look at some of those. These have to be respected or the interpretation will be wrong. For example, one self-evident rule would be that you cannot interpret one verse in the Bible in such a way that it contradicts what other verses in the Bible teach. It would be obvious that if you have an obscure passage that you’re not sure for some reason exactly what that means, that you would interpret it by passages on which we don’t have doubt on the same subject. There are certain rules that govern proper interpretation of the Bible. The result is that we can read the Word of God and we can interpret it on the basis of the exegesis, the isagogics, and the hermeneutics, and we can put this into classification. That is, we call these doctrinal categories—bringing together everything that the Bible says on one subject.

For example, the Bible has something to say about the old sin nature, so we bring together everything that the Bible says on that subject, and some place along the line we say, “OK, here are several points to remember about the old sin nature. And as you train yourself to take these summaries and think your way through them, you will come to an understanding concerning that subject and what God has revealed on it. Then you will be prepared to meet problems that arise in your life as this particular factor, that particular piece of information needs to be brought to bear upon that issue. Obviously, unless you know these summaries of truth, you’re not to get to first base on all kinds of issues that you’re going to have to face in life.

Almost two years ago we discussed some of the things the Bible has to say about war and a nation preserving its entity, and about the attitude of the hippie world. It was interesting that back then, a couple of ago, some statements were made, and you can go listen to it on those tapes, concerning the expression of leaders like Jane Fonda, Ramsey Clark, Tom Haden, and others of the radical student leadership group. I thought it was interesting that now at this point, because we interpreted what was happening in our society from the frame of reference of classifications of Scripture concerning the matter of war, and came to certain conclusions, that these conclusions are being confirmed in the experience of the returning POWs. The returning POWs have been consistently reflecting the attitude in discussing those who were visiting Hanoi, like Fonda and Clark and Haden, and those who were seeking to remove the United States from its role of resisting communism, that these people have been consistently viewed by the POWs in a disreputable disgusting loathsome light. They’ve had nothing but something derogatory to say about them.

Finally Fonda and her new husband Haden made a statement. What was the statement? That the returning POWs are pawns of the American government. They are do-dos, and in her own words the point was that these people are stupid. They don’t understand. I thought it was very interesting how the communist character comes through the mouth of these people because the communist always reassures that you don’t know what’s good for you. Here are these men who have borne up heroically and have come home and said, “We did the right thing. We resisted the enemy and we did not yield, and unfortunately our government did not fight the war to the conclusion to which it should have fought it.” But be it as it may, these men have come home and they know the kind of a hellish situation they went through. They don’t need some Fonda and some Haden to tell them that they don’t understand these things and to explain to them how they should feel about it.

Now we came to right conclusions concerning the attitudes that were being projected a couple of years ago. We came to those conclusions because we had a classification of Scripture that gave us God’s viewpoint and we could apply it to that situation. You can’t help but be a winner if you have these classifications of Scripture in your mind to guide you.

If you want to help our society, if you want to help humanity, this is the way to do it: Get God’s viewpoint into your thinking, and the result will be that you will not be coming up with all these hair-brained schemes that our political leaders come up with to solve human problems, and problems there are, but you will come up with ideas that at least are compatible with the Word of God so that they have some hope of working out.

The historical grammatical of interpreting Scripture brings us to this kind of understanding. Remember that every passage of Scripture has only one meaning. These is only one interpretation for a passage of Scripture. God has given us a method to come to that meaning. When we do not come to that meaning, it is because of the problems of some understanding on the part of the exegete or some lack of information that does not give us an understanding of what God has written. God has not given us a New Testament in order to keep us confused and in the dark. He has given us a book that we can interpret and where we can come to an understanding of what He means.

Now we are going to study the book of Philippians on this background with this technique and with this method. We’re going to look further at this method a little later in order to help you to understand why God says, “Do not neglect the assembling of yourselves together.” Why God says, “Respect, obey, and respond to the pastor-teachers that I have put in charge of your assembly to instruct you.” Your whole life and blessing is dependent upon that. If you fail to be in church to listen, or the pastor-teacher fails to be prepared to explain, then there is no other solution for your problems. You’re done for. That’s why this has to be done in God’s order.

So we’re going to try to take you to where you will see and understand, and you cannot just say, “Now I’m going to sit home. I’m going to sit here in my favorite rocking chair. I’m going to look out here at my beautiful bay window here, looking on the gentle flowing waters of the Trinity River, and I’m going to sing a little chorus here, and then I’m going to read the Word of God.” So you rock and you read the Word of God, and you say, “Now Lord, speak to my heart.” And you read a little more, and God speaks to your heart if you’re listening, because what God is saying is, “You’re a dummy, kid. Get off your rocker.” Or, “you are off your rocker. You think you’re on your rocker but you’re off of it. Get yourself in church. Get yourself where the Word is being explained according to this principle.” You’ll be amazed at the kind of a person you will become. You will enter into all things that God has for you, and the most relaxed life you have ever imagined. And you quit making all of those stupid mistakes that you’ve been making, and you’ll start functioning under the happiness that God intended you to have all along.

**Philippi – Philip of Macedonia**

“Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi.” The city of Philippi: We need to look at this city a little bit about its background. It was founded by Phillip II of Macedonia who was the father of Alexander the Great. Philippi was rich in gold mines and silver mines which made it very very attractive to Philip of Macedonia. It was necessary to him for his expansion. He had a saying that there was no fortress which was impregnable to which an ass laden with gold could be brought. He could always bribe his way into any fortress, and he had gold galore.

So the location of the area of Philippi was invaluable in the early days of the Macedonian empire. Actually there was a city called Krinides on the site of what later became Philippi. The word “Krinides” means “the little fountains,” because from this location flowed several springs that watered the city and the countryside and made it a fertile place. When Phillip of Macedon took it over, he enlarged the city. He re-founded it, so to speak, in 358 B. C., and he named it after himself—Philippi.

This city was ten miles inland from the seaport Neapolis on the west coast of the Aegean Sea. There was one of the famous Roman roads, the Via Egnatia, which connected Neapolis, the port city, over a path that went up 1500 feet high over … (a mountain) range into the city of Philippi. It was quite an impressive site just traveling that road from the seaport of Neapolis inland ten miles to Philippi.

Philippi itself was on a hill dominating a plain … through which ran the Gangites River. This position was very strategic geographically because it was the natural land route from Europe into Asia. This is one reason that Phillip of Macedon established himself here and made this a fortified place. It gave him a commanding position in the control of that part of the world.

The political status of Philippi changed in time. Two centuries after its founding in 168 B. C., it was conquered in Rome. The gold mines by this time had become exhausted, and Philippi had now become a comparatively minor settlement. However, in 42 B. C., an historic battle was fought here on the sight of Philippi, and Philippi again became a major city. Brutus and Cassius, you may remember from ancient history, were two of the conspirators responsible for the assassination of Julius Caesar. After the death of Caesar, Brutus and Cassius met Anthony and Octavian in battle for deciding who was going to run the Roman Empire. After two battles, Anthony and Octavian, who later became known as Augustus—the Augustus who was ruling when Jesus was born, conquered Brutus and Cassius, and the period of the Roman Republic came to an end, and the Roman Empire then began. Upon this battle, and to commemorate this victory, the city of Philippi was declared a Roman colony. For a city to be declared a Roman colony meant that it was viewed as being an actual part of Rome. When you entered the city of Philippi, it was the same thing relative to your rights as a citizen, it was the same thing as if you had walked into the city of Rome.

Anthony settled his discharged veterans in Philippi. Later Anthony and Cleopatra lost out to Octavian, and Octavian took over as Caesar Augustus who was ruling when Jesus was born. The partisans sympathetic to Anthony had been sent to Philippi from their estates in Italy. Consequently, Philippi became sort of a military retreat. It was filled with ex-military personnel.

It as certain privileges as a Roman colony. To be declared a colony meant that you had Roman citizenship. That meant that you could not be scourged. You couldn’t be whipped. It meant you could not be arrested, except in extreme cases. It meant you could not be punished without due process of a trial. It meant that if you didn’t like the trial, since you were a citizen of a Roman colony, you could appeal to Caesar to have your case heard. It was sort of like a Supreme Court decision.

The people in Philippi spoke Latin. They dressed in Roman style, and they were Romans all the way down the line. The army veterans were given land grants so it was an attractive place for military people to retire to. Philippi was granted also what was known as the Ius Italicum, which was a declaration that all the inhabitants of this city had certain economic privileges. Under this ruling, you didn’t pay taxes, as a citizen of Philippi. You had the right to own and to sell private property. You had certain political privileges. You had freedom from the authority of the provincial governor. Philippi regulated its own civic affairs. It was a very ideal place to live.

**Acts 16:11-24**

It was ruled by two magistrates. They were called the Praetores ... There were actually two civic commanders. In Acts 16:22 you have reference to these magistrates. The translation there is “magistrates.” It’s the Praetores who are actually referred to. The Praetores were assisted by certain policemen were called Lictores. Our Bible translates them as “sergeants.” It was these sergeants who carried the Fasces, which you have seen, which was an ax surrounded by rods, the symbol of authority. As the Praetores went about their business as magistrates, they were followed by Lictores carrying the Fasces which was the instrument of punishment because it was these rods on the Fasces that were used to beat Paul and Silas later when they were imprisoned in Philippi at the orders of the Praetores. The Lictores were actually sort of bodyguards.

In Acts 16 we have the historical account of the founding of the church at Philippi. This city was the first city that Paul visited in Europe. In Acts 16:11, the context tells us about the vision that Paul had on his second missionary journey. He was traveling with Silas and Timothy. For some reason Paul had been strangely hindered from ministry in Asia and Bithynia that he was interested in pursuing. Instead he went to the seaport of Troas on the Aegean Sea. There he had a vision of a man from Macedonia, one of the provinces of Greece, in the North. The man of Macedonia was a call to the apostle Paul to bring the Christian message to Europe, across from Asia.

Two days later they landed at Neapolis, the seaport town. Ten miles inland was Philippi. At this point Luke joined them. Now the four of them—Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke—moved into the city of Philippi. They came into this city and found no synagogue. There were apparently very few Jews in Philippi. This was strictly a Gentile city. There were a few women who were proselytes who had been converts to the Jewish faith. They met on the Sabbath day in worship down by the riverside on the Gangites River.

Acts 16:13 says, “And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by the riverside where prayer was accustomed to be made, and we sat down and spoke unto the women who resorted there.” There the apostle Paul found a certain businesswoman named Lydia. Verse 14 says that she was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira. “Purple” was a dye highly valued as a color in the Roman Empire. It was secured from a shellfish but you could only get one drop of the dye from one shellfish. Consequently it was very very expensive. It was a very lucrative business. Lydia was involved in the business of securing the purple dye from the shellfish. The purple garments industry was a big thing in a Roman colony like Philippi, for purple was a royal color, and therefore in high demand.

The reality of this woman’s conversion, which is what happened when Paul spoke to her, it says she listened to the message, “whose heart the Lord opened.” God the Holy Spirit brought conviction to her mentality concerning the gospel message. “She attended under the things which were spoken by Paul,” she went positive and believed the gospel. Consequently she was born again. “And when she was baptized and her household, she besought us saying, ‘If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there,’ and she constrained us. Immediately upon her conversion, God the Holy Spirit led her into an expression of divine good, which even a new convert who has not had his spiritual deficiency filled through the exposition of the Word of God, is capable of doing. He is capable of producing diving good under the filling of God the Holy Spirit—in a limited way. We see from Acts 16:40 that several men and women were subsequently saved in this contact of Paul and his party, and thus the Philippian church began. “And they went out of the prison and entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed.” This was the group of believers that subsequently had been gathered.

In Acts 16:16-24, we have the story of Paul’s trial in Philippi. Paul had cast out a demon from a fortune-telling girl in the city of Philippi. The result was that her ability to tell the future ceased. Once the demon was taken out, she could no longer predict the future. People today who are possessed with demons can make fantastic predictions about the future because the demonic world has great information concerning the future.

This girl had brought much financial gain to her sponsors. Consequently, they were (upset) when they discovered that the girl could no longer predict the future because as a result their source of income was cut off. So they made some inflammatory charges against Paul and Silas in order to cover their own greed and their vengeance.

The Praetores, without looking into the matter, ordered the Lictores to beat Paul and Silas, and to cast them into prison, which they did. Now we have told you enough about the city of Philippi as a Roman colony, and we remind you that the apostle Paul was a Roman citizen. So the Praetores could not have done a worse thing than to beat a Roman citizen without due process of a trial and then to have cast them into prison. The story continues here with what you’re well acquainted with of the earthquake that came that night as Paul and Silas were in this Philippian jail, singing hymns and praising God, after being accused of being Jewish troublemakers and anti-Roman. The earthquake at midnight broke the doors open. The jailer was about to kill himself because he had to pay with his life for any escaped prisoner, and he thought everybody had fled. Paul said, “Don’t harm yourself. We’re all here.” The result was that the jailer was saved as well as his family.

The next day the word was passed on to the magistrates, the Praetores, exactly who Paul was relative to his citizenship. So they gave the order to release them. Paul refused to leave. He said, “I want you to come down here, and I want you personally to unlock this door and take us out. We have been branded. We, as Christian missionaries, have been publicly branded as criminals. We want for that to be publicly rescinded.” So the magistrates were not going to take any chance. They knew that they were in deep trouble to have acted like this, to abuse their authority in a Roman colony in this way. They rushed down to the prison, brought the band out, lined up the Marine band, played Stars and Stripes Forever, and out of the prison came Paul marching with the flags all draped in salute, and it was really a magnificent occasion.

Paul, having established the infant church at Philippi, left, bearing in his body the wounds that had cause to bring that church into existence, to give it birth. Luke remained behind to guide the believers. He reverts at this point to using the third person again instead of the “we” term that he uses when he’s part of the party, so we know that he stayed behind.

The book that we’re going to study is a letter to this church that Paul established and founded in this way. Paul is now in prison in Rome when he writes this letter. Philippians 1:13 tells us that: “So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places. He is in Rome. He is in prison. Philippians 4:22 also indicates this: “All the saints greet you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.” The result of Paul’s contact in Rome was to bring many who were in Caesar’s own household into the faith. These believers were sending their greetings to the Philippian Christians from Rome.

The occasion of this letter was the arrival of Epaphroditus from the Philippian church to visit Paul in Rome. He had brought from the Philippian church a financial gift for Paul for the support of Paul and his ministry. Paul had received a gift from them once before at Thessalonica. This was a journey of 800 miles for Epaphroditus to cover from Rome to Philippi. It was going from New York to Chicago, or going from Dallas to Denver, which was no mean trip in those days.

Paul was very grateful for the remembrance sent to him and also for the ministry of Epaphroditus while he was with him. Paul at this time was briefed on the status of the Philippian church. Epaphroditus says, “Here’s the way things are back in the church in the Roman colony of Philippi.” On the basis of this briefing, which by and large was very encouraging, Paul was really in love with this church. This was a church that delighted his heart. He sat down and wrote the letter because Epaphroditus was going back, and therefore he had a messenger to carry the letter. God the Holy Spirit moved in in the year 61 A. D. and formed another segment of the New Testament canon of Scripture as this book was written. The return was somewhat delayed by an illness of Epaphroditus, an illness from which he almost died. But when he recovered, Paul sent this letter, thanking them for this gift that they had sent him.

His purpose in writing Philippians we may sum up in closing: 1) Appreciation for their fellowship; confidence in their spiritual progress; and, to express hope for them—Philippians 1:3-11 (the first two verses are his salutation.); 2) His purpose was to report his own circumstances, his own hopes, and his own fears (Philippians 1:12-26); and, 3) His purpose was to exhort them to unity, to humility, and to consistency (Philippians 1:27 – 2:18); 4) To inform them of his purpose to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to them (Philippians 2:19-30); 5) His purpose was to warn them against the Judaizers (Philippians 3:1-14) and the Antinomians (Philippians 3:15 – 4:1); 6) To appeal for the reconciliation Euodia and Syntyche, two women who were squabbling in the church (Philippians 4:2-3); 7) To admonish the Philippians to joyfulness, prayerfulness, and the pursuit of all that is divine good (Philippians 4:4-9); 8) To express his gratitude for their recent financial gift (Philippians 4:10-20); and finally, 9) To send greetings back to the believers at Philippi (Philippians 4:21-23).

Next time we will introduce you in a little more specific detail to the technique of interpreting Scripture on the basis of the historical grammatical method. I think that when we are through, you will see how absolutely essential it is for you to be regular in the habit of attending the explanation periods in the local church services of the Word of God. Without that, you simply will never make it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973