

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 8, Introduction to Philippians

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This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 8, Introducing Philippians.

Welcome back to the biblical studies lecture series on prison epistles.

Beginning this lecture, we have looked at the general introduction, and we have covered Colossians. Now we are going to look at Philippians, and as we begin Philippians, it will be important for us to know the context of Philippians. So, let's go back to some of the early material we would like to look at in terms of geography.

If you remember very well or even perhaps you know a song about this, come over to Macedonia and help us. When Paul had that vision or dream, he moved to this part of the world, which is called Macedonia. This will become a very important area in the world.

Macedonia is a region and not a town. Two key cities in Macedonia that we know are prominent in our Bible is one is Philippi, the city to which the letter to Philippians would be written, and the other is Thessalonica or Thessaloniki, depending upon your pronunciation or, depending upon your reference either to modern-day Thessaloniki or Thessalonica. Those two cities are very important, as you can see on the map.

Now, we have moved from modern-day Turkey to Europe, and this is where Paul's letter to the Philippians will be written. But what do we know about this city called Philippi, and what do we know about the culture of the time? What do we know about the religion and the people of the area? Let's begin to look at a few things about this city. This city was interesting because it got its name from Philip of Macedon, who was the father of Alexander the Great.

If you remember from your high school history, there was a young man who was a student of Aristotle who would later rise and conquer most of the known world at a time. He will go as far as North Africa. He will establish a city that will be named after himself.

He'll be known as one of the great warriors of his time. The Greeks will become their most dominant nation or people group in today's language, a superpower of the time. Following that, we will see a lot of things unfolding, but hold on to that thought and let me refresh your memory.

Alexander's father is Philip of Macedon, and Philip will be one of the leaders who will deal with the Persian leaders and all kinds of complex issues and warfare before the Greeks take over. It is this Philip that the city of Philippi will be named after in 356. This city, known as Philippi, was the first Roman district or it was the first of a Roman town, a Roman colony in that area.

Now, you may know some interesting things that will actually intrigue you about this city that you read about in the Bible. If you are like me, I like Jesus Caesar. I like those lines. French Roman countrymen, lend me your ears.

I like to hear names like Brutus, Cassius, Casca, and others. You want to know that actually, this was a place where Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius and where Jesus Caesar was assassinated, and so this has all kinds of elements to this city, and I will show you in a moment how this is going to affect the landscape by the time of Paul. We know that when the Romans later took over this city, they would give this city an important status in Roman jurisprudence or law.

They will accord Philippi what was known in Latin as *Ius Italicum*. *Ius Italicum* comes with so many benefits, but it also comes with the city being deemed a Roman city run by Roman laws, Roman customs being practiced or encouraged, and a lot of attempts of what in government we call a polity of assimilation where Romans would like to assimilate as much as possible to change the Greek culture of the city of Philippi and make it more Roman for the most part. We know that by the time Paul will be involved or will be in this city and later right to this city, a lot is taking place.

Latin had become the main language of the time, and the citizens enjoyed full Roman citizenship. So, think about living in Philippi by the time of Paul. You were born Greek, and you are not just an ordinary Greek.

You live in a city named after the father of Alexander the Great, one of the great heroes of Greek civilization. Now, you live in a place where, by birth, you are given Roman citizenship. It is no wonder you will see as we look at Philippians that actually Paul will begin to steer the church's attention to the fact that another citizenship is the most important.

The heavenly citizenship is perhaps more important than the dual citizenship that they have, Greek or Roman, in a city where people are obsessed about citizenship and actually those who are citizens are not likely to feel welcome because there is a lot of pride, a Greek pride, the pride that comes along with Roman citizenship as well in this city. We don't have a lot of evidence to suggest to us that there were a lot of Jews by the time of Paul in Philippi, but if you are reading between the lines from what I was saying earlier, you would notice that this should not come as a surprise at all because if these people are so prideful about their citizenship and Greek and Roman citizenship is the order of the day and things are being run so much like

Rome, then this place could be hostile, I should say unfriendly to foreigners more than Rome because they have something of Greek to protect or to be proud of and now they have something of Roman to protect or to be proud of. So foreigners can come and enjoy all the great business transactions, excitement, rich culture, and activities in Philippi, but one thing is for sure: we don't have any evidence of a Jewish synagogue in Philippi, which is something that would have happened if there were a large number of Jews in the city.

So, scholars tend to have this consensus that if there were any Jewish population at all, it must have been a very, very small group of Jews to the extent that we don't have traces of their presence in the archaeology or the landscape as we have today. To live in Philippi, I think O'Brien tries to characterize what was going on there with the status they had. With the use of *Italicum*, they have the right to purchase, they have the rights of ownership, the right to transference of property together with the rights to civil lawsuits with privileges including the use of *Italicum*.

Philippi itself was modeled after the mother city, Rome. It was laid out in similar patterns, the style and architecture were copied intensively, and the coins produced in the city bore Roman inscriptions. Now, this was a city that was already thriving, so imagine Alexander the Great. He became a world leader, influential despite all the problems he had and his early death, but this is why his father's heritage and his father's, what should I say, his father's pride should be residing, it's named after his father.

So, the city was developing fairly well, but when the Romans came in, they tried to change the architecture, they tried to make it a mini Rome, they wanted to make it a place where Romans would feel at home and turn the Greeks, turn their pride upside down, that actually now they can concede their culture and actually make Roman activities dominant in this city. Using *Italicum* was a privilege, but also a sword, but citizens of Philippi were going to just take advantage of both of their citizenship and enjoy it. Hansen put it this way in his commentary on Philippians, since it was a Roman colony, the citizens of Philippi enjoyed all the privileges and rights of Roman citizens.

They were exempt from taxes and governed under Roman law, and they used *Italicum*. Philippi was modeled after the mother city, Rome. Rome arches, bath houses, forums, and temples dominated Philippi at a time of poverty.

As far as religious activity in this town is concerned, just imagine if a lot of Roman activities were going on in the city, then they would definitely have or experience a lot of religious activities to that effect. We'll see that Greek gods and Roman gods will be worshipped. I should perhaps pause and state that in the ancient world, atheism was rare.

It was more of polytheism that was common. People liked to worship several gods, whichever god that could actually do their bidding. If you are a farmer, you want the god of fertility to help you to do well.

And if you're a farmer and your wife wants to have more children, you also want to see the god who is able to help her have more children. If you want to be more successful in XYZ, you try to consult the powers that are able to help you. That was the culture of the time.

So, having Roman gods and Greek gods was just the norm in major cities by the time of Paul. In this sense, Philippi was not an exemption. The city was placed under the protection of an Egyptian god, Isis, because Isis was known to be very, very powerful.

But the interesting thing is that perhaps because it was a foreign deity, they wouldn't actually make Isis the patron deity of the city. The patron deity would actually be Sibylle, the mother goddess. Having a patron deity is not unusual in the ancient world.

You want to know that it was rather common for every city to have a patron deity and several other deities that were active. When we get to Ephesians, I will give you some indications about a context, and you will actually learn that it is not uncommon at all. That is to say that Paul did not go to a city in which religious activity was minor.

But that was not the only thing prevalent there. Inhabitants also practiced magic and astrology. We know that there's so much evidence.

I mean we have in the modern day, we have a whole collection in a big book from what we call the Greek Magicka Papyri that informs us about the magical tests that were used in the ancient world. Magic was common. In fact, astrology was even more common.

Now, where you have Romans, it becomes very interesting because magic and astrology have become so prominent that the aristocrats hire foreigners who are good at magic and others to come and reside with them. In Roman history, there are stories about emperors who were suspicious of foreign astrologists and magicians and how they worked in town, and so issued all kinds of edicts with trying to deal with them when they in themselves are harboring some of the good ones in. Their own camp. They get exposed, and philosophers try to deem them hypocrites.

We know that magic and astrology were common. Paul came to this city to do ministry, and here we know that Paul will make a significant influence or contribution. We know from the accounts of the book of Acts about how Paul came here and before I get there, let's just take a walk-through Philippi today.

Roman city, a lot of pagan activities modeled after Rome by the time, and a lot of civilization. Civilization doesn't mean people are less religious, and so let's just look at some of the things that may interest you. If you went to the sites today, you will see things like this.

Some of the excavation of the site. You will see the landscape. You see some columns still standing.

You become aware that the place was quite developed by the 1st century. Perhaps another view of the center of town. You begin to see that the center's architecture was quite busy and dominant.

There were a lot of activities. There were also columns. It's actually straight lines here and there if you observe it carefully as you think about in ancient Rome.

I'll just show you something that my students find very interesting. I am reminded sometimes in the classroom that perhaps this is where we got the idea of flushing toilets because what they used to do is they have this place, and that is actually their public latrine. When you go and take care of business, there is a sewage system that washes underneath.

So, the stuff gets washed down the stream out of town to a place where if it smells, it's not a big issue. Now I'm just showing you this interesting stuff just to draw your attention to the fact that they were quite developed then. They also know not to have a stinky backyard.

And like humans, like all of us, they knew that it was necessary to take care of business sometimes and you need to come up with ideas to make it better. Let me also show you something related to our studies of prisoner pistols. There is this site discovered in Philippi.

This site is actually referred to as Paul's jail. We don't know whether Paul was specifically jailed in this particular location, but it gives us a window to see the kind of prisons they had at the time. Where you have stones, the place could be dark, you have all these elements, you have these bars, and you get a person there, and it's a confined place, and it is clear that it was not easy for somebody to get out of jail.

Let's finish our tour of Philippi by going to one of the entertainment places. As early as Paul's time, there was actually a theater like this where they could have all kinds of activities. Some of them you don't want to know more about, such as the activities with gladiators and all that, but people go there and have fun.

Now you think about modern-day stadiums, and you say, oh, that is great, great architecture. Where did they get the idea from? Sometimes, I look at the Roman

Coliseums, and I look at some of these stadiums, and I would say they were doing it back then. That is to say that we are not dealing with a people or a community of Christians who are so damn, so uncivilized, know next to nothing, and so think Christianity is one of the things that you do when you don't know much.

Some are intelligent people; of course, Paul himself was well-educated. There were business people in this church, as I will show you. Perhaps you may have forgotten some of your interesting reading from the book of Acts.

So, since we are talking about Philippians, why don't we go and then read about what Luke has to say about Philippi, the city to which Philippians will be written? Let's look at Acts chapter 16 from verse 11 and take note of some of this background. So, setting sail, Luke writes, from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace and the following day to Neapolis, and from there we went to Philippi, the city we are talking about here, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.

Paul has the history right. We remained in this city some days, and on the Sabbath day, we went outside the gates to the riverside where we supposed there was a place for prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. It may interest you to know they got the opportunity to talk to some people, and it was some women who were together that they were able to interact with first.

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, which is from Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, a seller of purple goods who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul, and after she was baptized at her household as well, she urged us, saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay, and she prevailed upon us. So, one of the early converts in Philippi was Lydia.

As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and asked, crying out, these men are servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you the way of salvation, and this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her, and it came out of her at that hour.

Notice what was going on here. It was a place where there was a spiritual activity. I just told you there was magic, there was astrology, there were all kinds of pagan practices, and somebody was practicing divination and making good money as a result.

But when her owners, the slave girl owners, saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace, which the image I

showed you earlier on before the rulers and when they had brought him to the magistrates they said, these men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful to us as who? As Romans to accept or practice? Guess what? This is a Greek city, but they had become a Roman colony, and they were expressing their pride as Romans before the Roman magistrate. The crowd joined in attacking them, and a magistrate tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. When they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safe.

Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fasted their feet in the stocks. Wow. So, Paul and Silas will be thrown into jail, but guess what one of the things that will happen as a result? You think they're supposed to be sitting down there and say, now we have been to a city called Philippi, we have got some converts, we are told they met some women there, we are told that the people were actually uncomfortable that these guys are advocating something different from their customs and they were also proud in asserting that their Roman customs were being changed.

Paul came in here. Christianity will be planted here, and it is here that later Paul will express and give us a clue into the understanding that actually this church in this city, having a lot of major women playing in this church, actually active in this church, will be one of the churches that he loves most. This will be the most friendly letter Paul will write to any church called Philippians.

Philippians in the book of Acts. One of the things we observe with Philippians and Philippi as mentioned in the book of Acts is that nothing in Luke's account conflicts or contradicts what we read both in the text and in the history of their developments. We also see how companionship is expressed in Acts and suffering is expressed in Acts and in Philippians, being consistent and not contradicting each other.

One of the other features we observe when looking at Philippians in the book of Acts is the fact that Lydia, the businesswoman from Thyatira, was a prominent figure who was going to be of great help to the church in Philippi. So now we know something about the Philippians and the culture of Philippi, and we have now begun to understand how Christianity entered this culture. Women's gatherings gave Paul an opportunity, and Lydia invited them to her home.

The church is born. Paul will be jailed this time not in Philippi but in Rome, and he will write from Rome to this church. Let's read what Hansen has to say about this conversation with Acts and Philippians.

In an account of Paul's visits to Philippi around AD 49, Acts captures the essence of this historical background by describing Philippi accurately as a Roman colony. Residents in Philippi expressed their pride in their Roman citizenship by accusing Paul

and his associations of advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice. Acts 16 verse 21.

Paul's complaint that he and Salus were treated unjustly as Roman citizens was an important factor, and I'll draw your attention to that in a few minutes, it also points to the higher regard for Roman citizenship in the Roman colony. One of the benefits of being a Roman citizen is you cannot just be tried and treated in a way that is not right or appropriate, and Paul, when he is in trouble, likes to pull up the right frogs, and though he will say I am a Roman citizen. Roman citizens don't get scorched, and so that is going to work in his favor, and Hansen is drawing attention to the fact that if you look at all those, those actually go on to show that indeed what we have in Acts and Philippians are consistent with each other.

If we look at Acts 16, verse 6 to Acts 18, verse 5. I would not be able to read that here, but I encourage you to take a look at it. It tells about early Christianity in Philippi, and you'll see how the church is involved in this contest. You begin to understand some of the background I gave you earlier.

This is not an easy place. There's a Roman influence but also a lot of religious activity. There are a lot of mystical components in the way people live their lives.

There were also a lot of business enterprises in this city. The church will be meeting in Lydia's home, as Luke told us. Women will play a significant role in this church, and we don't want to underestimate the role of women in the church.

Women in the Philippian church and their role here are going to be so significant that when later we think about 2nd Corinthians, Paul writing 2nd Corinthians, Paul is going to brag about the fact that of those churches he worked with, it is the Macedonian churches. We only know the Macedonian churches as the Philippian churches and the Thessalonians. They will be giving, and they will be so generous in supporting Paul even out of poverty.

Highlighting the relationship he has with this community. Perhaps when we have more women in the church, they tend to be more generous. Modern-day pastors will tell you that.

When the women come to the mission's house, they normally come with something. The guys may not even come there. But please, if you are a pastor following this study series, don't lean towards the women so that you get more gifts.

That's not the point being made here. The point being made here is the church was generous. There were a lot of women in the church at the early stages, and they were going to develop a very good relationship with Paul.

Paul is going to write elsewhere to show the strength of the relationship he developed with the church in Philippi. You should not be surprised then, as we go through the letter to the Philippians, how much joy and emotion come through the writing for Paul to establish how connected emotionally he is to this church in a positive way. Looking at the letter, let's look quickly at the occasion of this letter.

If we have this general background, what other things could be driving Paul to write this letter? Well, we know that the letter was written while Paul was in jail, and we also know that this is one of those letters that was never disputed as being written by Paul. So, if you think about Pauline letters, you think about a letter that is coming from jail. Scholars don't argue against that generally. And so, what are some of the things that were going on that will call for this letter to be written? And where would even Paul be? I don't want to be simplistic, and even though I mentioned to you earlier that I think Paul is writing from Rome; I want to draw your attention to the fact that there are some scholars who argue that Paul was not writing from Rome; he was writing from Ephesus.

Others argue that he was writing from Caesarea or Caesarea, depending on how you pronounce that word. Most scholars, increasingly so in the past 10-15 years, argue for Rome because the evidence points in that direction, and the imprisonment accounts we have about Caesarea and Ephesus are so much so that, or maybe so scanty, I should say, that we cannot attribute these letters coming from that. The evidence just doesn't match up, and it's a complicated way of unpacking how you decide this one or that one, but the evidence seems to point directly to a letter that is written from Rome.

So, something to note here: if Paul is writing from Rome, from a Roman jail, he's writing to a church that is based in a Roman colony. That is going to affect the language sometimes that will be used in Philippians to the extent that some of the words he will use in Philippians will be words that Paul would never use elsewhere. That seems to suggest to us that Paul knew his audience, and he's based in a context where he knows that this is a language only those in Philippi will understand, and it's also a language that is readily available and readily on the mind of someone who is incarcerated in Rome.

Some have argued for Ephesian imprisonment because they think the proximity is close, but the proximity argument still falls short in many ways. So, for the sake of this lecture, let's assume that Paul is writing this letter from Roman jail. What is the purpose of the letter? In other words, why was he writing this letter? Well, he was writing this letter because Epaphras or Epaphroditus was going back, and as Epaphroditus was going back to Philippi, there was an opportunity for Paul to actually send a letter to a church that he deeply cared about.

So, Paul writes here to inform his dear friends about the circumstances of his imprisonment. He wanted them to know the conditions in which he is in Rome. He wanted them to know some great people who have been of great help to him.

He wanted them to know that, indeed, the church in Philippi had not stopped being there, and he deeply appreciated that. He also wants to warn them against the dangers that are being posed by some missionaries who are likely to visit the church. These are Jewish missionaries who are planning to visit the church.

Paul wanted to warn the church to be aware of their presence because when they come, we know from Paul's other letters that when these Judaizers come, they come in to cause commotion to Paul's gospel. What is Paul's gospel? Well, in Christ, Jews and Gentiles can together become a people of God and find salvation. Well, the Judaizers will come in and say maybe that is true, but maybe the Gentiles have to observe some Jewish traditions in order to qualify.

So, if you are familiar with Galatians, you know there are issues of circumcision and all activities there. As in this lecture series, we talk about Colossians. You realize that issues of Sabbath and all kinds of things, festivals, the moon, all these angels, and some Jewish mystical components were all present there.

That is a common theme when Judaizers come to undermine Paul's ministry. And here, we don't seem to think that there were already these guys in the church causing the problem, but it seems that Paul anticipates that they will come, and he's trying to actually help them build defensive walls against their influence. So definitely, those who will come trying to have Jewish propaganda should not be able to have a place if the people receive Paul's letter and take Paul's words seriously.

Paul writes to summon the church to stand firm and to stand fast using the language he used specifically, which we will look at when we start looking at the text. He calls for unity, and for Paul, he even goes to a point where he will use language and calls for a radical change of mindset to be able to help them to actually ward off any of the things that these potential Judaizers may bring into the church. Paul's other purpose is to promote joy and a positive spirit in the face of suffering.

I mentioned to you that it is the church that really loves Paul. They care about him. They have a very good relationship with him, but all this while they know that he's in jail.

They even know one of their colleagues Apaphoritos had had access to Paul. Some of them have come even when they came to Rome for a visit to look for Paul to find him. Obviously, they were uncomfortable with the situation and really worried about their friend, who was in jail for the sake of the gospel.

Think about this contest and Paul turning around and saying don't feel sorry for me. I want you to rejoice. I actually want you to rejoice because I am suffering for a good reason.

Paul wants to turn around being the one incarcerated to create a positive vibe and encouragement vibrancy for the Christian community so that they will be willing to stand firm for the gospel and they'll be willing to do all that it takes to stand and be faithful, even if it means going to jail to keep that spirit alive. One other area that is not obvious that scholars have not emphasized that my own research focuses on this and I try to point out very often is the way Paul uses kinship language to actually show solidarity. Paul wants to make the church understand that they are a family.

They are a community. They are people who believe that God is their father. They are brothers and sisters who need to be together, who need to live together.

Kinship is one of the key things. In fact, I have argued elsewhere that kinship is one of the languages that Paul uses to foster solidarity in a church. Here, he purposely employs that language to make sure they understand that the relationship they have is not a bunch of strangers hanging around temporarily. They are brothers and sisters with a common destiny.

If you have a quick glance through that letter, you may see some of the references in chapter 2, verse 12, in chapter 4, verse 1. Three times in these references, he refers to them as beloved, and then he refers to them as beloved brothers seven times. He portrays them, and sometimes he even wants to make himself come across as like a kind of parent figure to them so that he can appeal to that sense of relationship. Before we go into the letter of Philippians, you may want to ask what makes Philippians different from other Pauline letters or are they any different? So far, you may find me saying in this lecture as if all the issues and questions about the disputes and disputes and all that don't apply here.

Yes, actually, it's true in Philippians we don't dispute Pauline authorship, but is it actually true that Paul is consistent in all that he says in Philippians as we find in other areas? No, there are some language differences that you may find, and there are some patterns that you may find that actually show you that there is some kind of distinctive about Philippians that is noteworthy. In Philippians, for instance, there's no clear reference to the Old Testament at all. In other letters of Paul, we have references to Old Testament texts.

In Philippians, we don't. Perhaps the only reason this occurs is the fact that there may not be a Jewish population in the church, and therefore, allusion to the Old Testament may be difficult for these Greeks, who are also Romans, to comprehend or follow, but we don't have any explicit reference to the Old Testament in

Philippians. We also find that the generosity of the church in Philippians is not linked to the collection for Jerusalem.

Paul wants to depict them as just a generous church. In fact, he talks about them helping him, they being there for him, for Paul. The generosity of the Philippians is just their way of life.

So, when he's going to do what I call one of his greatest fundraising with sincerity and honesty in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and chapter 9, he would say the Macedonian churches have given out of their poverty freely. And he will actually bash the Corinthians, making them look like they are; I don't know how there is this expression in my language; literally translate, I'm strong. And in English, you do have a word for that.

And I don't know whether you call it a fist arm or something. People who don't give have tight fists. They don't give at all.

Paul bashes the Corinthians, trying to remind them that, look, even the Macedonians, these guys in Philippi and Thessalonians, when they are poor, they give a whole lot. You guys are just there with your damn fist like this. You don't want to give, but nobody is asking you to give from what you don't have.

Nobody is forcing you to give. We ask you to give willingly. Paul does not link the generosity in Philippi to actual generosity or the fundraising endeavor for the Jerusalem church.

That is their character. They like to give. One of the other things you want to note in terms of other letters from Paul is that this letter has such a positive family note.

Regarding Paul's other letters, let's fix some problems. Hey, there's some commotion in the church. Now, let's address that.

You guys like to do this. This is what I want to fix for you. Hey, you guys are. Some people are coming in and causing commotion.

Some of you are doing this. Somebody is sleeping with somebody's father's wife, and you guys are comfortable. Let me address the issue.

Some people are claiming to be more spiritual, or some people are talking about law, and I need to correct that issue. No, Paul is writing like a family letter here. Hey, you are my friends.

You are family members. I understand what you've been doing. You have been great to me.

Let's rejoice. Let's rejoice. Let's rejoice.

He will use the words joy and rejoice several times in this letter. And lastly, on this list of items here that are different, Philippians use praise and blame and a call for imitation to promote a lifestyle that is honorable and worthy. He used specific rhetorical patterns that we know among Greeks and Romans.

This is the reason why I would have to introduce you to some basics of ancient Roman and Greek rhetoric in order to help you understand this letter. The notion of using blame and praise is that what is blameworthy is what you should not do. What is praiseworthy is what is honorable.

So, if he says it is shameful even to name something or to do something, it means it is no, no. It is praiseworthy. This is honorable.

It means go for it. In that culture, it becomes a very, very important motivation to discourage bad behavior and to promote worthy behavior. Having outlined these four distinctives, I also want to draw your attention to another thing.

Scholars have been arguing whether we should read Philippians as one letter or we should look at it as two letters. Why? Scholars observe some interesting features that we, some of us, actually argue about and say don't actually make sense. And so, because they say the argument does not make sense, they go on to say this letter should be seen as two letters, and there are two specific references.

Of these two references, one is just between chapter 3, verses 1 to 2, and the other one is chapter 10, verses 10 to 20. Scholars argue that there is an abrupt transition between chapter 3, verses 1 and 2. Verse 1 reads, finally, brothers, rejoice in the Lord to write the same things to you. It is no trouble to me, and it's safe for you. And then chapter 2 out of verse 2, out of nowhere, starts like look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who are mutilators of the flesh.

Scholars argue that this radical break is actually an indication that one letter ends and another begins or some form of interpolation is taking place. Or they'll go on to argue that from verse 10 of chapter 4, the delayed greetings are not something that's supposed to be typically polite, so somebody put it there. Well, this is the thing: scholars like to argue about everything.

By the way, we need to do this for a living. And so that's what we do. It is true that in ancient Greek rhetoric, that is actually a powerful rhetorical strategy.

To develop one team, let it go on, and as the people following you, you just stop and change the subject and drive home an important thing you want them to stand on or

to avoid and to come in quickly. So, the very time that you get their most attention, you sneak in the agent material that you want to make sure they stick to. So, we are now discovering more and more that that rhetorical strategy from verse 1 of chapter 3 and verse 2 is not supposed to be awkward.

If you are not dealing with Paul, that should not be an issue if you are dealing with any ancient Greek text. On the question of chapter 4, verses 10 to 20, it is just an interesting remark. If I decide to give greetings or something later on, what is the problem? Does Paul have the permission to do that? Well, in scholarship, you can't make such a very simple argument.

So, this is how we handle things like this. If we find a text that is strange, we apply a particular discipline in our field of scholarship called textual criticism. In textual criticism, what we do there is to try to apply certain strict criteria to determine the originality of a particular text and potential additions or omissions.

For some of the additions, we have used the word interpolation for them. Scholars who have argued for Ephesians Philippians chapter 4, verses 10 to 20 being interpolation make a strong case, but they cannot make a strong case on the basis of our standard agreed method of establishing what is credible and what is not, namely textual critical studies or text criticism. So, that leaves that argument fairly weak.

It is just saying somebody is saying something, and I'm reading it. It doesn't make sense to me, and because it doesn't make sense to me, I think the person didn't say it. It becomes a weak argument. That is why I like what Ben Witherington has to say regarding that particular argument.

He writes in his fairly recent commentary on Philippians, we have no historical evidence that ancient scribes edited letters together in such a poor and piecemeal fashion. In fact, we do have any historical evidence at all that we don't have evidence at all that scribes edited personal letters. And Witherington says I know none.

And sorry for my typo on the screen there. So yes, there is this debate, and nowadays, the debate is dying off, but I want to draw your attention to that because the debate is alive, especially when we are dealing with scholars that lean more towards the liberal side. They want to discredit Philippians and say they are two letters, and because they are two letters, we don't know who wrote whom, and somebody actually came in and edited them.

Do you want to call them Paul? We have no evidence whatsoever to suggest that somebody has two letters that edited them. The only basis for that argument is actually that I am reading it, and it doesn't sound right. Is that really a strong argument to make? So, let me just end this with you as far as the interpolation discussion is concerned in this lecture.

No contextual evidence or manuscripts or otherwise support the theory of interpolation. Two, the theory rather contradicts the mode of operation or the method of operation of what we know about redactors. Redactors of material would rather try to smooth things up.

They don't make things more awkward. So, that argument rather contradicts what the basis of the argument is, and I should say the sharp change of tone is not uncharacteristic of the rhetorical strategies of rhetoricians, philosophers, or, if you like, public speakers of the ancient world. Why shouldn't Paul do what others do? And why, without any textual evidence, manuscript evidence, or any tangible evidence to that effect, should we succumb or subject ourselves to just claims without support that these are two letters? That is why when we read this letter or go through it, we will actually go through it as, in fact, one letter written by the Apostle Paul from a Roman jail to the church in Colossians, in Philippi.

Let me conclude this session with this quotation from Ben Witherington. There are some 1633 words of Philippians, which makes it considerably longer than the usual letters we find in ancient Papyri from Egypt. By Pauline standards, this document is relatively short.

Of those words, there are, in fact, 438, some 42 are found nowhere else in the New Testament, and a further 34 are unique within the Pauline couples. Some of these unique words reflect the unique content of Philippians, which involves reference to the Praetorian guard or to Caesar's household or to citizenship, which is to say some of this unique vocabulary signals the very specific provenance from which and to which Paul writes. Paul wrote, Witherington suggests, and Paul wrote one letter as I will submit.

In Paul's writing about such a unique city that we have looked at, Paul uses different vocabulary. Hold on to that thought. Paul was writing about a city that was known initially as a Greek city, but now inhabitants are also Roman citizens.

He went there and ministered, and there were prominent, and there were a good number of women in this church. He has a very good relationship with them. He is in jail.

He writes to encourage them. He writes to actually keep their spirit up in the face of suffering. He writes to caution them about potential Judaizers who come in to cause problems as missionaries, and he calls them to a spirit of unity.

As we delve into this book, think about it as one book written by Paul to the church in Philippi. Hold on to the thought that some of the language is different as I read to

you from Witherington's quotation, and when we come, we'll pick up from there and get into the text. Thank you very much for beginning Philippians with us.

I just hope that in this biblical study series on prison epistles, you will keep learning with us and enjoy these studies as a study both for your intellect, for your soul and for your personal life. Thank you very much.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 8, Introducing Philippians.