

A The author of the epistles:

❖ **Paul imprisoned.**

- During his first imprisonment in Rome – between 60 and 62 AD – Paul wrote at least five epistles: to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the church of Laodicea (which has not reached us).
- Since there were no serious charges against him, he was allowed to live in a rented house, always guarded by a Roman soldier (Acts 28:16). This allowed him to continue preaching the gospel, even to the Praetorian Guard itself (Philp. 1:13).
- Examining the epistles, we can see that Paul had many collaborators (Col. 4:7-14; Philm. 23-24). He was also in contact with Caesar's household (Philp. 4:22).
- Paul had hoped to be released soon (Philm. 22), a hope he no longer had during his second imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:6).

❖ **Ambassador in chains.**

- From the moment he decided to be an ambassador for Christ, Paul's life was not easy (2 Cor. 6:4-5).
- The Bible records only three imprisonments of Paul before he was taken to Rome: in Philippi (Acts 16:22-24); in Jerusalem (Acts 23:10); and in Caesarea (Acts 23:33-35). But surely there were several more (2 Corinthians 11:23).
- In all these difficulties, Paul never considered himself helpless (2 Cor. 4:7-9). Unable to preach freely, he became an “ambassador in chains” (Eph. 6:20).
- Paul's attitude teaches us that when we suffer hardships for preaching the gospel, we must put our full trust in God; always keep His Word in mind (2 Tim. 2:15); and cling to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter who gives us strength and courage (Zech. 4:6).

B The recipients:

❖ **History of Philippi.**

- During his second missionary journey, Paul's plans took a turn. The Holy Spirit was guiding his steps. (Acts 16:6-12).
- Philippi was the place chosen by the Holy Spirit to begin the preaching of the Gospel in Europe. As a fully-fledged Roman city, the Philippians were exempt from paying taxes and held Roman citizenship by birth.
- Paul's custom upon arriving in a new city was to visit the synagogue. But in Philippi there was no synagogue! On the Sabbath they found a place of worship and there they preached to the women gathered (Acts 16:13).
- From this meeting emerged the first European convert: Lydia. She was baptized, along with her entire family (Acts 16:14-15).
- But the enemy did not remain idle. He urged a fortune teller to confuse people's minds by pretending to support Paul (Acts 16:16-17). When the girl was released, Paul and Silas' troubles began (Acts 16:18-24).
- The result: the conversion of the jailer and his family (Acts 16:25-33). There is no doubt that the Gospel entered Europe with the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

❖ **History of Colossae.**

- Epaphras was Paul's companion during his imprisonment in Rome (Philm. 23). A native of Colossae (Col. 4:12), he was the one who introduced the gospel to that city (Col. 1:7).
- Colossae was a city in the province of Phrygia, near Laodicea and Hierapolis, where Epaphras also preached (Col. 4:13). It had a large Jewish population. One of the most prominent Jews living there was Philemon, a fellow worker of Paul, in whose house a church met (Philm. 1-2).
- One of Philemon's slaves, Onesimus, ran away to Rome, where he accepted Jesus through Paul (Philm. 10-11). By returning Onesimus to his master, Paul showed how the relationship between masters and slaves, or superiors and subordinates, should be (Philm. 12-17).

❖ **The churches of Philippi and Colossae.**

- The introductions to the letters to the Philippians and to the Colossians, which are very similar, show us two important aspects (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1-2):
 - (1) In God's eyes, church members are holy and faithful, despite their mistakes.
 - (2) In the church there is an order, where some of its members have more authority and responsibility than others:
 - (a) Paul is an apostle, a top-level leader
 - (b) Timothy is his collaborator (pastor)
 - (c) Bishops are local leaders (elders)
 - (d) Deacons administer the church
- From prison, Paul thanks the Philippians for the help they sent him (Phil. 4:18).
- To the Colossians, he sends his collaborators to comfort them (Col. 4:7-9).