

A Survey of the Book of Philippians

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Author:

Paul, the apostle (**Philippians 1:1**), formerly Saul of Tarsus (**Acts 8-9**) identifies himself as the author of this letter. The early church unanimously accepted it as from Paul, but there are questions about the date and place of writing. This letter is considered to be one of the most loving, warm, and personal of all that Paul wrote.

Date:

It is generally accepted that Paul wrote it around 60-62 AD in the city of Rome, while in a Roman prison (**Philippians 1:12-20**). This is why it is lumped with the other prison epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon). He also wrote another letter to the Laodiceans (**Colossians 4:16**), unfortunately, Paul's letter to the Laodiceans has been lost (**I Corinthians 5:9**). We can see from the other Prison epistles the spirit that must have been reflected in that lost epistle.

There are a few who doubt whether or not Paul wrote it from a Roman prison cell, however, there are clues to this fact. For instance, in **Philippians 1:13** Paul mentions the palace guard and in **Philippians 4:22** he references Caesar's household. It also seems from his writing that wherever he was staying it was a long ordeal. Those who do question the location of the writing try to point to his time in Ephesus (**Acts 19-20**) or his imprisonment in Caesarea (**Acts 24-26**) as possible locations. However, we have no reference to an imprisonment in Ephesus and the imprisonment in Caesarea was further from Philippi than Rome.

Theme:

This letter is about living a joyful Christian life. Paul is attempting to encourage his readers but also challenge their way of thinking. If we could choose to be a member of one of the New Testament congregations, we would probably choose Philippi. If we could choose to receive a letter, this would probably be it. This group seemed to embody the spirit of Christ. The church seems to have a spirit of love and generosity (**II Corinthians 8:1-5**) as it would have been a part of all the Macedonian churches described there.

Paul wanted the congregation in Philippi to know what he was experiencing trials but he got through them because of his faith and strength in Christ. Therefore, he has only praise for them and reflects a positive state of mind despite his imprisonment. The terms "joy" and "rejoice" appear sixteen times in this letter.

In order to reveal the need for the church to have joy Paul evaluates his own life and circumstances (**Philippians 3:12-16**). He tells his secret of own contentment in Christ (**Philippians 4:10-13**). Paul was not perfect, and his life was not free of problems, but he found a way to rely on God (**Philippians 2:1-11**).

Audience:

The church of Philippi was the intended audience. The origins of the church are recorded in **Acts 16**. The church began because of the work of Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke because of the Macedonian call. Remember that Paul received a vision of a Macedonian man saying, “Come over and help us” (**Acts 16:9**).

The missionary team had success early on with a ladies prayer group that met outside the city (Lydia). It should be noted that it was Paul’s usual custom to go to the synagogue first, so why did he stray from that pattern (**Acts 13:14, 17:1-2**)? We really don't know, but it is assumed that there was not a synagogue in Philippi, and that the Jews in the city were already restricted from group assembly, and meeting on their own. It was also tradition that you needed ten men to start a formal synagogue so there may not have been enough men to form one yet.

The Jews were not embraced in Macedonia. The people in that region saw Yahweh as a foreign God. Some prominent Roman cities restricted worship to outside the city gates. There is a very interesting statement in **Acts 16:20-21** that hints to this fact. The mission team was accused of being Jews, or at least followers of a branch of Judaism, so they were advocating an illegal practice (and stirring up the locals over the slave girl).

By the end of their ministry in Philippi three households became the nucleus of a new congregation. There was the aristocratic family of Lydia (**Acts 16:11-15**), the middle-class family of the jailor (**Acts 16:25-34**), and the lower class slave girl (**Acts 16:16-18**). Within ten years this nucleus had become a full-fledged congregation with “bishops and deacons” (**Philippians 1:1**). On his first visit we see Paul casting out demons, and performing miracles, but ten years later he simply trusts in God for the recovery of the sick (**Philippians 2:25-27**). This should tell us something about the purpose and duration of miracles in the first Christian century and the maturity of the churches of Christ. He also commended two preachers/church leaders including Timothy who was a regular visitor, and Epaphroditus (the minister in Philippi).

Key Verses:

Philippians 1:6, 1:21, 1:29, 2:3, 2:5-11, 3:9-10, 3:13-14, 3:20, 4:4, 4:6-8, 4:13, 4:19

Outline:

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| <p>I. The Single Mind – Chapter 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. The Fellowship of the Gospel (1:1-11)B. The furtherance of the Gospel (1:12-26)-C. The faith of the Gospel (1:27-30) | <p>III. The Spiritual Mind - Chapter 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Paul’s past (3:1-11)B. Paul’s present (3:12-16)C. Paul’s future (3:17-21) |
| <p>II. The Submissive Mind – Chapter 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. The example of Christ (2:1-11)B. The example of Paul (2:12-18)C. The example of Timothy (2:19-24)D. The example of Epaphroditus (2:25-30) | <p>IV. The Secure Mind - Chapter 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. God’s Peace (4:1-9)B. God’s Power (4:10-13)C. God’s Provision (4:14-23) |

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