

New Testament Survey

The Book of Philippians

I. Attestation and Authorship¹

A. External

1. Ignatius alludes to 4:3 in his *Epistle to the Smyrneans* (chapter 4).
2. Irenaeus cites 4:18 in his work *Against Heresies* (IV.xvii.4).
3. Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian frequently cite Philippians.
4. Clement of Rome seems to use 1:27 in his *Epistle to Corinth* (chapter 21).
5. Polycarp admonishes the Philippians to study carefully the letters Paul had written to them.
6. Philippians appears in the Muratorian canon, the Old Latin, and the Old Syriac.

B. Internal

1. The writer calls himself Paul - Philippians 1:1.
2. The historical details, language, style, and tone of the letter are all distinctively Pauline.

II. Background and Destination

A. Written to the believers in Philippi - Philippians 1:1.

B. The City of Philippi

1. Philippi was one of the major cities of Macedonia, the others being Thessalonica and Berea.
2. Philippi received its name from Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, who conquered the city in 360 B.C.
3. Philippi became a Roman colony during the reign of Octavius. He and Marc Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius near Philippi.
 - a. They were citizens of Rome.
 - b. They had a measure of self-rule.
 - c. They had special privileges as Roman citizens.
4. Philippi was situated on the Egnatian highway, a major trade route through Macedonia. This would insure fast travel to and from the city to other parts of the Roman Empire.

¹ Henry C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Co., 1987), pp. 247-248..

C. The Beginning of the Church at Philippi

1. It's birth - Acts 16:9-15.
 - a. Paul was on his second missionary journey when he received the vision of the man in Macedonia - Acts 16:9-10.
 - b. Paul then sailed to Samothracia, journeyed to Neapolis, and then to Philippi - Acts 16:11-12.
 - c. Since Philippi had no synagogue (which means there was a very small Jewish population there), Paul went to the river on the Sabbath, a place where any Jews would congregate.
 - d. It was there, and the river, that Lydia was converted and the Philippian church was born.
2. It's first conflict - Acts 16:16-24.
 - a. Paul and Silas were followed by a demonized woman - Acts 16:16-17.
 - b. After some time, Paul, desiring that people did not think that the woman was part of his "team", cast the spirit out of her - Acts 16:18.
 - c. This angered her owners who then stirred up trouble and had Paul and Silas cast into prison after being beaten - Acts 16:19-24.
3. It's first revival - Acts 16:25-34.
 - a. Paul and Silas, being in prison, sang hymns and praises to God - Acts 16:25.
 - b. God sent a strong earthquake which opened all of the prison doors and made the jailor think that all of the prisoners had escaped - Acts 16:26-27.
 - c. Paul reassured the jailor that all the prisoners were there, after which the jailor asked Paul how he could be saved - Acts 16:28-31.
 - d. The jailor then took Paul to his home, washed up their wounds, and as a result Paul preached to his whole household with the result that all of them believed as well - Acts 16:32-34.
4. It's establishment - Acts 16:35-40.
 - a. Paul and Silas, being Roman citizens, make the magistrates of the city personally apologize and release them from prison - Acts 16:35-39.
 - b. After visiting the brethren (which assumes that there were some believers there), Paul and Silas leave for Amphipolis - Acts 16:40.

III. Occasion and Date

- A. Date²
1. The Roman Imprisonment view - ca. A.D. 60-62.
 - a. There is evidence that Paul was in prison at Rome - 1:13, 4:22.
 - b. The tenor of this imprisonment is that he was under house arrest, a condition which is consistent with Acts 28:30-31.
 - c. The epistle was probably written towards the end of this time period.
 - 1). There is mention of the fact that an imminent verdict is due - 1:20, 1:27, 2:17.
 - 2). Some time must have elapsed for the hostility to the gospel to grow - 1:15.
 - 3). Some time must have elapsed for the gospel to progress - 1:12.
 - 4). Some time must have elapsed for at least five trips between Rome and Philippi.
 - a). Timothy's journey to Paul. Timothy is not mentioned in Paul's trip to Rome, but is present when Philippians is written.
 - b). A message to Philippi to indicate that Paul is in prison.
 - c). A trip by Epaphroditus to Rome to assist Paul.
 - d). A message back to Philippi regarding Epaphroditus' condition.
 - e). A message back to Paul regarding the Philippian reaction to Epaphroditus' sickness.
 2. The Ceasarean imprisonment view
 - a. How do we fit five lengthy trips into the two years Paul was in Ceasarea?
 - b. How do we understand Paul's references to Ceasar's household?
 - c. How do we understand the seriousness of his imprisonment?
 3. The Ephesian imprisonment view
 - a. There is no evidence that Paul was imprisoned at Ephesus.
 - b. This view is very speculative.
- B. Paul needed to send Epaphroditus back to the Philippian church, and as a result decided to write them a letter commending Epaphroditus as well as a letter to deal with some problems in the Philippian church.

² William Hendricksen, *New Testament Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), pp. 21-31.

IV. Purpose

- A. Paul wished to thank the church for their generosity in the gift they sent via Epaphroditus - 1:5, 4:10, 4:14.
- B. Paul needed to address the problems of disunity that Epaphroditus brought him - 2:2-4, 4:2.
- C. A possible need to deal with a “perfectionistic” group who thought they had spiritually “arrived” - 3:15.
- D. A possible need to exhort the Philippian church to endure trials and persecution - 1:27-30, 2:15, 4:1.

V. A Basic Outline³

- A. Salutation - 1:1-2.
- B. The Thanksgiving and Prayer
 - 1. Fellowship - 1:3-5.
 - 2. Confidence - 1:6-8.
 - 3. Ambition - 1:9-11.
- C. The Apostle's Personal Circumstances
 - 1. The Progress of the Gospel in Rome - 1:12-14.
 - 2. The Rivalry and Zeal among the Preachers - 1:15-18.
 - 3. His own Hopes and Fears - 1:19-26.
- D. The Exhortation to Fulfil Various Duties
 - 1. To Unity - 1:27-2:4.
 - 2. To Humility - 2:5-11.
 - 3. To Consistency - 2:12-18.
- E. The Apostle's Plan for the Future
 - 1. To Send Timothy Soon - 2:19-24.
 - 2. To Send Epaphroditus at Once - 2:25-30.
- F. The Warnings Against Judaism and Antinomianism
 - 1. Against Judaism - 3:1-14.
 - 2. Against Antinomianism - 3:15-4:1.
- G. The Appeal for the Reconciliation of Euodia and Syntyche - 4:2-3.

³ Thiessen, p. 252.

H. The Exhortations to Follow His Example

1. In Rejoicing - 4:4
2. In Prayerfulness - 4:5-7.
3. In the Pursuit of All Good - 4:8-9.

I. The Acknowledgement of the Gift They Had Sent - 4:10-20.**J. Salutation and Benediction - 4:21-23.****VI. Chapters To Remember**

Philippians 2 The Kenosis

Philippians 3 Pursuing the Prize

VII. Points and Peculiarities**A. Joy - the main theme**

1. The word "joy" appears in its noun or verbal form some sixteen times.
2. Joy is in contrast to happiness. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit as is available regardless of circumstances. Happiness is an emotion, and depends on the environment.

B. Union with Christ

1. This book contains one of the greatest Christological passages in the NT, 2:1-11.
2. Paul's great desire was to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings - 3:10.

C. Fellowship (*koinonia* or sharing)

1. Fellowship with the Philippians - 1:5
2. Fellowship of the Spirit - 2:1
3. Fellowship in Christ's sufferings - 3:10

VIII. A Closer Look

A. Philippians 1

1. Thanksgiving and Prayer - Philippians 1:3-11
2. The Power of the Gospel - Philippians 1:12-26.
3. Hang In There - Philippians 1:27-30.

B. Philippians 2

1. Exhortation to Unity - Philippians 2:1-4
2. The Kenosis - Philippians 2:5-11
3. Work Out Your Own Salvation - Philippians 2:12-16
4. Models of Spiritual Service - Philippians 2:17-30

C. Philippians 3

1. Beware of Judaism - Philippians 3:1-7.
2. Pursuing the Prize - Philippians 3:8-16.
3. Follow Me - Philippians 3:17-21.

D. Philippians 4

1. Get Along - Philippians 4:1-3
2. Rejoice in the Lord - Philippians 4:4-20