

INTRODUCTION

A. Historical Perspective

In Acts 16, Dr. Luke wrote: *"⁹So we set sail from Troas and ran a straight course to (the island of) Samothrace ¹⁰ and on the following day to Neapolis. ¹¹From there we went to Philippi ¹² a Roman garrison-town and the chief city in that part of Macedonia. We spent some days in Philippi."*

Paul founded the church at Philippi on this 2nd missionary journey (Acts 16:6-12). Timothy, Silas and Luke accompanied Paul. This is where Paul went he had the vision of the man calling for help from Macedonia.

- Philippi was the first European City where a church was founded.
- Paul visited there again on his 3rd missionary journey (Acts 20)
- Many retired Roman soldiers lived in Philippi, so it was known for its patriotism and loyalty to Caesar.

B. Author: The Apostle Paul. There is no serious challenge to his authorship in Academia.

Internal: Paul claims to have written it. It is in his style of writing and the doctrine is Pauline through and through. Additionally, the reference to Timothy accords well with Acts 16.

External: Paul's name is on the earliest mss. Earliest church fathers support his authorship...Clement of Rom, Ignatius, Polycarp...etc.

C. Date: The date we assign is dependent on which imprisonment he wrote from.

- Caesarea after his 3rd Missionary journey from 57-59 AD.
- Rome 60 - 62 AD.
- Rome 65 - 67 AD when he was executed.

There is no reason that the traditional date of 61-62 AD, from Rome should be contested.

D. Written to "Philippian Christians, "with Bishops and deacons:" (1:1)

These were mostly Gentiles as there is no synagogue mentioned. By the time Paul wrote the letter, the church was well organized with bishops and deacons. From the beginning women played prominent roles in the church.

E. Occasion and Purpose for the letter

- Paul expresses his thankfulness.
- Tells them his status physically, spiritually, and legally
- Announces the return of Epaphroditus after his illness and hints of a possible release
- Provides practical admonitions, exhortations and warnings.

F. Theme/Character of the letter:

- The letter is centered on the hymn in 2:5-11. The Letter is not a single idea like some of Paul's letters, but a series of short essay-like writings echoing back to the hymn
- An important theme is joy in Jesus. A key verse is 4:4: *"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!"* The word joy or a form of it is used 16 times in the letter.
- It is a personal letter to people for whom Paul cares deeply. He uses "I" 64 times and always in a way that conveys a warm, personal affection for them.
- There are no direct quotations from the OT affirming that it was written to a Gentile-dominated church.
- Doctrinally it is important:
 - It contains a primary scripture for the pre-existence of Christ. It is also an account of His humiliation on one hand and exaltation on the other (Phil. 2:5-8).
 - Phil 3:9 is a statement on justification.
 - It describes what it means to the Christian to "know Christ," 3:10; 4:13.

- There is an expectation of the Parousia (1:6; 2:10,11; 3:20,21; 4:5b)

G. The Outline:

- a. Introduction:
 1. Greeting from Paul and Timothy (1:1-2)
 2. Prayer and thanksgiving for the Philippians (1:3-11)
 - a. Philosophy of Christian Living – Christ our Life (1:6 a key verse)
 - b. Partakers of grace and participants in the Gospel (1:7 a key verse)
 - c. Results of grace – pure and blameless, righteous (1:10,11 key verses)
- b. Paul Reflects on his imprisonment (1:12-26)
 1. His circumstances have produced progress (Christ is proclaimed) in the Gospel (1:12-18)
 - a. Imprisonment is producing confidence in others (12-14)
 - b. Even Paul's enemies advance the Gospel (15-18)
 2. Paul is confident and committed – to live is Christ (19-26)
 - a. He will be delivered either in life or in death – confidence (19-23)
 - b. Circumstances don't matter– commitment to Jesus and them (24-26)
- c. Pattern for Christian Living – Christ our example (1:27-2:18)
 1. Let your life be "worthy of the Gospel."
 - a. In close community
 - b. Without fear
 - c. Privileged to suffer for Christ
 2. Plea for humility and concern for one another (1-4)
 3. Picture of humility (5-11)
 4. An admonition to imitate Jesus' humility (12-18)
- d. Two Examples of Living Worthily (2:19-30)
 1. Timothy (2:19-24)
 2. Epaphroditus (2:25-30)
- e. Paul's Own Example (3:1 – 4:1)
 1. Pattern for Christian living (VV. 1,3)
 2. A warning against Judaizers (V. 2)
 3. Cost of Discipleship (4-11)
 4. Pressing toward the prize (12-16)
 5. A call to follow Paul's example; beware, there are enemies (17-21)
 6. Our true Citizenship calls for perseverance and patience
- f. Challenges to the Philippians (4:2-9)
 1. Exhortation to Unity in the cause of the Gospel (1-3)
 2. Exhortation to Holy thought - Contemplations (4-9)
- g. God's Provision, Closing Thanks, and Benediction (4:10-23)
 1. Paul's gratitude for their financial and spiritual support (10-20)
 2. Closing greetings and benediction (21-23)

H. The Epistle

- a. Introduction:
 1. Greetings: (1:1-2)
 2. Prayer and thanksgiving for the Philippians (1:3-11)
 - Paul's Prayer : Verse 6 is a key verse
 - VV. 9-11: "*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*"
 - He prays that, "*your love may abound more and more but with knowledge and discernment...*"
 - So that:

○ V. 11 Fruit

b. Paul Reflects on his imprisonment (1:12-30)

A Major teaching that comes from this section is that circumstances, even things that seem wrong, unfair, and downright evil, will not hinder God's purposes.

1. Paul is in prison, but the Gospel is advancing both because of him and because his example is giving others courage (V. 12-14).
2. Even the folks who oppose Paul for personal reasons are advancing the gospel, VV. 15-17...in other words, the gospel message is not dependent on Paul.
- c. Pattern for Christian Living – Christ our Example (1:27 – 2:18)
 1. Live in a worthy manner. For them it meant:
 - Standing firm in community against opposition to the Gospel (V. 27)
 - Not fearing the probability of persecution/suffering (VV. 28-29)
 2. If the Christian community is to thrive, what must drive it, (V. 4)?
3. This hymn is rich with echoes of the OT...especially of Adam (Gen. 1-3) and Isaiah's suffering servant (40-55). It is Scripture that should be put to memory. It is Christology supreme, telling us of the:

_____ of Glory and equality with the Father.

Unlike Adam, he did not try to _____ with God,

Emptied Himself of His _____ and became a human and a Servant.

In that state, he was _____ to the point of death on the cross.

Because of His work as God's suffering servant, he was _____ above all.

4. An admonition to imitate Jesus' humility (12-18)
- d. Two Examples of Living Worthily (2:19-30)
 1. Timothy (2:19-24):
 2. Epaphroditus (2:25-30):
- e. Paul's Own Example (3:1 – 4:1)
 1. Pattern for Christian living (VV. 1,3), i.e. rejoice in the Lord and put no confidence in the flesh.
 2. A warning against Judaizers (V. 2)
 3. Paul re-evaluates all of his pedigree against knowing Jesus (4-11)
 4. Pressing toward the prize (12-16)
 5. A call to follow Paul's example; beware, there are enemies (17-21)

True Citizenship:

e₁. Stand Firm until then! (4:1)

- f. Challenges to the Philippians (4:2-9)
 1. Exhortation to Unity in the cause of the Gospel (1-3):)
 2. Admonition to not live in fear, (4:6-7)
3. Think Right (4:8-9)

g. God's Provision, Closing Thanks, and Benediction (4:10-23)

1. Paul's gratitude for their financial and spiritual support (10-20).
 - His testimony is that his life of sacrifice is not true hardship

- Sacrifice has become his greatest teacher. He has learned the elusive secret of contentment.

2. Closing greetings and benediction (21-23)

Paul's awareness of Jesus' love and Presence gave him hope and humility in his darkest hours and so he knows Jesus in a deeply personal and transformative way.

You don't meet Jesus; you encounter Him. That is the kind of Jesus Paul invites us to follow and that is what Paul's letter to the Philippians is all about.