

THE BOOK OF Philippians

Introduction:

Philippians is a very practical book. At the time Paul wrote it, Paul's converts were being persecuted by both Jews and Gentiles. The book deals with the persecution in the Christian's life. Chapter one deals with joy and faith in Tribulation. Chapter two deals with humility and obedience in tribulation, Chapter three deals with the cause and end of tribulation. And chapter four deals with peace and confidence in tribulation.

Statistics:

4 Chapters, 104 verses, and 2,183 words

Author:

Paul is virtually undisputed as the author of this epistle. His name appears in 1:1 as the author and the autobiographical section (3:3-6) harmonizes perfectly with what is known of his life. Also, his close association with Timothy is mentioned (1:1; 3:19-24).

Moreover, Timothy was with him when he evangelized Philippi (Acts 16:1.). Not only is the external evidence strong for Paul, but it has been rightly observed that this personal letter reflects both his mind and character. There is no motive for someone to forge such a letter.

The Date and Place:

This is considered one of the prison epistles written from Rome as also Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. Though some have suggested it was written during his earlier Caesarean imprisonment (Acts 24:27) this is very doubtful. He refers to the Roman palace guard (1:13), converts from Caesar's household (4:22), and an impending verdict of possible death (1:20-26; 2:23-24).

The date would be late in his prison term, as indicated by the imminent verdict and the lapse of time seen between the news of Paul's imprisonment reaching the Philippians, the arrival of their messenger, Epaphroditus, and the recovery of Epaphroditus from illness which occasioned his return to Philippi with the letter. The date is therefore placed at about A.D. 62 from Rome.

The Destination:

The city of Philippi lay inland in Macedonia in a strategic location where east meets west. Rome made the city a colony in 42 B.C. (Acts 16:12) and the residents were allowed full Roman citizenship with special privileges. As more of a military center than commercial, it attracted so few Jews that there was not a synagogue there in Paul's time (Acts 16:13). Philippi was populated by the ruling class of Romans, the majority class of Macedonians, and a mixture of Orientals.

THE BOOK OF Philippians

Paul's contact with the city came during his second missionary journey when the "Macedonian call" drew him over from Troas (Acts 16:8-10). There he met Lydia, a Proselyte to Judaism, who was converted with her household (16:14-15). Soon after, Paul and Silas were seized when Paul cast a demon out of a girl used by her masters for profit.

They were thrown in jail, but an earthquake set them free and this led to the conversion of the jailer and his family (Acts 16:16-34). The church, formed around these first converts, was composed of mostly Gentiles with perhaps a few Jews. Epaphroditus, mentioned in the epistle, was evidently a leader and maybe the pastor. The church at Philippi grew into a close and affectionate relationship with the apostle and assisted him financially a number of times before this gift acknowledged in the letter (4:15-18).

Purpose of Writing:

Philippians could be called a "thank you" note to the church for the gift sent through Epaphroditus (1:3-7; 4:10-19). Indeed, this is one of the central purposes for the letter. But there are other purposes for the apostle's writing. He took the occasion to address some potential or budding problems in the church. One potential problem was that of Judaizers trying to influence the church (3:1-11). He also warns against an antinomian element (3:17-4:1).

However, it does not appear that either heresy had influenced the church any. Paul's warnings are more a preventative than a corrective measure. Another problem was the beginning of some disunity among the believers. He urges harmony between Euodia and Syntyche (4:2-3) and encourages unity in general throughout the letter (1:27; 2:2-4; 4:4-9).

The frequent occurrence of the idea of rejoicing and joy relate to the unity of the church in the Lord. This is obtained by a spiritual mindset (1:27; 2:3,5; 3:15-16; 4:7-9) exemplified in Christ (2:5-11). A final purpose is to inform the Philippians of his circumstances concerning his imprisonment (1:12-26), trial, possible release, and the visit of Timothy and maybe himself (2:19-24).

Key Verse: 2:16

The Occasion:

When the Philippians heard of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, their concern for him resulted in sending Epaphroditus to help and to bear a financial gift (4:18). Epaphroditus became very ill while in Rome and upon recovering, was sent by Paul back to Philippi to soothe both the church's concern and Epaphroditus' distress for their concern (2:25-30).

This was the immediate occasion for the letter. Paul took the opportunity of Epaphroditus' return to inform the Philippians about his circumstances, thank them for the gift, and give them some relevant warnings and exhortations. No crisis caused Paul to write, just the affection that he had for them and his deep gratitude for their participation in his ministry.

THE BOOK OF Philippians

Argument:

The epistle's structure follows its loose personal nature. Paul begins with information about his circumstances, then appeals for their unity, warns and exhorts, and finally expresses his joy and gratitude for the Philippians' concern for him.

After a brief introductory greeting (1:1-2), Paul reviews the fellowship the Philippians have had with him in his gospel ministry and informs them of his present circumstances (1:3-30). His fond thoughts of them issue in an expression of thanks for them in prayer (1:3-11). His reference to their "fellowship" or sharing in the gospel doubtless includes recognition of their past and recent financial gifts and the sharing of Epaphroditus with him (1:5). He prays for their continued growth in love, knowledge, discernment, and fruitfulness (1:9-11).

"But I would ye should understand,..." (1:12) begins an informative section in which Paul expresses his fellowship with the Philippians amid his present circumstances in prison (1:12-30). Though he is bound, he rejoices in the furtherance of the gospel because of his circumstances (1:12-18). The palace guard and more know of his testimony for Christ as others are emboldened to preach (1:12-14). Paul rejoices that the gospel is preached regardless of the preacher's motives (1:15-18).

Uncertain of the outcome of his trial, Paul turns to a consideration of the prospects of his life and death. He may anticipate an early release, or may simply express confidence in the vindication of his ministry through the advance of the gospel, but whatever his fate, he is determined that Christ be magnified in his life or death (1:19-20).

Though death is gain for him, his life will profit the Philippians (1:21-24). His confidence of future ministry to the Philippians reveals a positive outlook on his pending trial (1:25-26). The possibility of his release and a visit prompts him to exhort the church to steadfastness in unity and in the face of opposition (1:27-30).

The theme of unity is expanded as Paul now appeals for the Philippians' humility, which is the bedrock for the unity he desires among them (2:1-30). His direct appeal for unity through humility is based on the blessings they enjoy in Christ (2:1-4). The appeal is also based on and reinforced by the example of others (2:5-30). Foremost is the example of Christ (2:5-11).

Paul exhorts them to have the same mind as Christ (2:5) and follows with an explanation of what that means. As deity, Christ humbled Himself to become a man and served men by obedience which stretched to the cross (2:6-8). God vindicated such humility by exalting Christ above everything (2:10-11).

Paul consequently appeals for the same kind of obedience in the Philippians as they grow in their own salvation experience and continue to bear a witness to the world (2:12-16). Indirectly, Paul may intend to use his own sacrifice as another example of humble service (2:17).

THE BOOK OF Philippians

Two more examples of humility and service are set forth as Paul informs the church of relevant circumstances pertaining to Timothy and Epaphroditus. He informs them of his plan to send Timothy and comments on his humble character (2:19-23). Paul expresses his own desire and hope to visit as well (2:24).

His mention of sending Epaphroditus is another occasion to illustrate humility (2:25-30). This servant had concern for Paul and great longing for his home church. For Christ's sake in ministering to Paul, he almost lost his life to illness. The unity Paul desires for the church at Philippi depends on the kind of humility and sacrificial love demonstrated by Christ, Timothy and Epaphroditus.

In a more somber section, Paul warns the Philippians about heresy and exhorts them to proper conduct (3:1-4:9). The first warning is against confidence in the flesh (3:1-11), which was probably occasioned by the presence or influence of Judaizers. In warning them about succumbing to fleshly demands such as circumcision, he reminds them that the source of joy is the Lord (3:1-3).

This is confirmed by Paul's own experience (3:4-11). Though he has many reasons to boast in the flesh (3:4-6), he considers all human achievement incomparable to what is gained in the righteousness and power of Christ (3:7-11). Therefore, he exhorts them to make Christ their only prize worth striving for (3:12-16).

A second warning is against those who live for the flesh (3:17-4:1). These antinomians are enemies of the cross because they serve self, not Christ (3:18-19). Using their Roman citizenship as a reference point, Paul urges the Philippians to live up to their position as citizens of heaven (3:20-21). His final appeal for steadfastness is rooted in his deep affection for the them (4:1).

His concluding exhortations for proper conduct are intended to build unity in the church (4:2-9). The first thing the church must do is secure peace between the divided Euodia and Syntyche (4:2-3). The Philippian believers must realize joy in the Lord, show gentleness, and obtain peace by turning their concerns over to God in prayer (4:4-7). By proper meditation and imitation, they will experience the special manifestation of God and His peace in their church (4:8-9).

The letter ends on a personal note of rejoicing over the Philippians' concern for Paul (4:10-20). Their care is demonstrated by meeting Paul's need through Epaphroditus and the financial gift (4:10), even though Paul has learned to be content whatever his circumstances (4:11-13).

He expresses gratitude for their gift as he also remembers their displays of concern in the past (4:14-16). He also recognizes the profit the Philippians receive from giving (4:17). As a pleasing sacrifice offered to God, their giving will be rewarded with an abundant supply for any need of theirs (4:19). His final words consist of greetings and a benediction (4:21-23).

THE BOOK OF Philippians

The emphasis on the joy of the Lord and the attitude of humility will help the Philippians solve and prevent whatever problems threaten them. In a personal way, Paul encourages them to continue in doctrine and in conduct reflective of their position in Christ. The letter not only serves these concerns, but is a convenient way for the apostle to inform the Philippians of his present status and express his love and gratitude to these who have stood by him in his ministry.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. At the time Paul wrote Philippians, His converts were being persecuted by _____

2. Chapter four deals with what in Tribulation? _____ and

3. Philippians is considered to be what type of Epistle? _____
4. Do all things without murmurings and _____: That ye may be
_____ and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a
crooked and _____ nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;
Holding forth the _____ of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ,
that I have not run in vain, neither _____ in vain.
5. Paul's concluding exhortations for proper conduct are intended to build _____
in the church.