

>>>>>> Introduction <<<<<<<

Author

- 1) The undisputed author of the letter to the Philippians is Paul the Apostle.
- 2) Timothy is also included in the salutation, but aside from that mention, the letter is written basically in the first person indicating that Paul is the primary writer.
- 3) When we closed the book of Acts a few weeks back, Paul was in prison in Rome.
 - a) Before coming to Rome he had been in custody under Felix in Caesarea awaiting trial on some charges that had been leveled against him some 2 plus years before.
 - b) Now, in Rome, he was under house arrest in a rented house with round-the-clock guard and had been for almost 2 more years when this letter is written.
 - c) He was able to have visitors and with that freedom came the ability to preach the Gospel and continue his work as an apostle.
- 4) Beyond the biblical record of Acts 28, there is no historical record of his trial under Nero, its results, or exactly when or if it took place.
- 5) As we mentioned, tradition and the early church fathers indicate that by some means, Paul was set free and went on at least one more missionary journey.
 - a) He was then martyred some 5 years later – again, according to tradition by Nero.

Date of Writing

- 1) During those two years of house arrest in Rome Paul composed at least 5 letters.
 - a) This was from approximately 60CE to 62CE.
 - b) The letters were:
 - i) Ephesians
 - ii) Colossians
 - iii) Philemon
 - iv) The letter to the Laodiceans (Lost)
 - v) Philippians.
 - c) We believe Philippians was the last, probably written in 62CE prior to his release.
 - d) In fact, the letter to the Philippians was likely the last letter Paul ever writes to a church.
 - i) As tradition has it, he wrote three other letters beyond Philippians, all during what we might call his 4th missionary journey or during his final imprisonment and martyrdom.
 - ii) These were the two letters to Timothy and his letter to Titus.
- 2) Some scholars disagree with the Roman imprisonment being the place/time of the writing. They believe instead that he was imprisoned in Ephesus.

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- a) I personally disagree with that stance for several reasons which we will not go into now because of the time required.
- b) However, there is a paper from the Theopolis Institute that really lays out the pros and cons nicely.
- c) I have provided a link to this paper “Paul in Prison: Ephesus or Rome?” in the notes for this lesson that you will have access to next week.
- d) PAPER: [https://theopolisinstitute.com/paul-in-prison-ephesus-or-rome/#:~:text=Wright%2C%20the%20leading%20evangelical%20N,near%20future%20\(verse%202022\).](https://theopolisinstitute.com/paul-in-prison-ephesus-or-rome/#:~:text=Wright%2C%20the%20leading%20evangelical%20N,near%20future%20(verse%202022).)

Target Audience

- 1) Obviously, the target audience was the church at Philippi.
- 2) As I am sure you recall, Paul, along with Silas, Timothy, and Luke founded the Church at Philippi on his second missionary journey.
 - a) Of course, Philippi is in Macedonia which is now northern Greece.
 - b) This was the first church that is considered to be European.
 - c) All of this takes place in around 50CE to 52CE.
- 3) Paul, Silas, and Timothy are in Troas and meet up with Luke. Then the story goes from there...

Acts 16:9–15 (NASB 2020)

⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and pleading with him, and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, we immediately sought to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹ So after setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the following day to Neapolis; ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were spending some days in this city. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were thinking that there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

First Convert in Europe

¹⁴ A woman named Lydia was listening; she was a seller of purple fabrics from the city of Thyatira, and a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. ¹⁵ Now when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

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- 4) Shortly after this, Paul gets in trouble because he casts out a demon from a slave girl and costs some folks their livelihood.
- 5) He and Silas are then beaten and thrown in jail and this ushers in the next group of converts we are told about – the jailer and his family.

Acts 16:32–33 (NASB 2020)

³² And they spoke the word of God to him together with all who were in his house.

³³ And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

- 6) Finally, after Paul and Silas are released...

Acts 16:40 (NASB 2020)

⁴⁰ They left the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brothers and sisters, they encouraged them and departed.

- 7) So, at this point, we have a church beginning with the conversion of Lydia and her household and then others over the time that Paul was preaching there.
 - a) And finally before Paul leaves the city, the jailer and his family become members of this church.
- 8) We should also note when thinking about this congregation, that as far as we know, there were few if any Jews as members here.
 - a) We do not know for sure, but as we discussed in our study of Acts, there were likely no synagogues in Philippi.
 - b) This is likely the reason why Paul needed to go the river on the Sabbath at the beginning of his stay there to find a place to pray.
 - c) One thing that we should mention here which is reasonably important.
 - i) Since there were assumed to be no synagogues in Philippi, we must also assume that there may have been few if any copies of the scriptures for this new church to use.
 - ii) I am sure that God took care of this but it is just one more difficulty which Paul faced as he planted churches.

- 9) Paul returns to Philippi at the end of the third missionary journey. We read in Acts 20 vs. 6.

Acts 20:6 (NASB 2020)

⁶ We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and reached them at Troas within five days; and we stayed there for seven days.

- 10) Likely, they spent Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread in Philippi which would amount to about 2 weeks before they sailed.
- 11) Though we do not know the length of time he stayed there each time, from the first paragraph of the letter, it will be obvious that he had created a strong bond and feeling for this church.

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- 12) This last visit is in 58CE. We know then that the church has been established for about 6 to 8 years.
- 13) Now, since we know that the letter is written in 62CE this church is now about 12 years old.
- 14) We will see in the greeting that they have established elders and deacons and as will also be obvious from our study, they have had time to develop a few problems.
- 15) One other consideration here in the actual time Paul had spent with these folks back at the beginning.
 - a) I believe I am correct in saying that this is the first fully Gentile church that was founded.
 - b) This is based on the fact that, as indicated, there were probably few if any Jews in Philippi.
 - c) To found a church in that situation would require considerably more effort in teaching and preparation than one where Jews were members who had the Scriptural knowledge which could be shared with the Gentile converts.
 - d) That being said, my guess is that he spent a considerable time there in the beginning.
 - e) Evidently it worked because the church has been growing now for 12 years.

Purpose and Message

- 1) The purpose of the letter, as we will see, is simple – to thank the Philippians for their gifts and to strengthen these believers in their faith.
- 2) Though this is a very personal letter and Paul does keep it positive and upbeat throughout, there are still issues he will deal with.
 - a) Divisive rivalry
 - b) Selfish ambition
 - c) Judaizers
- 3) Despite all these potentially somber and difficult subjects, Paul manages to keep the message positive and filled with joy and rejoicing.
 - a) In the coming weeks, we will see Paul express his concerns about Self-sacrifice, Christian living, and unity.
- 4) All of these things are as important for us today as they were for this young church.

Outline of Philippians

- 5) The simplest outline for the Philippian letter is:
 - I. Joy in Suffering (1:1–30)
 - II. Joy in Serving (2:1–30)
 - III. Joy in Believing (3:1–4:1)

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IV. Joy in Giving (4:2–23)¹

1) So, let us begin ...

Philippians 1:1–11 (NASB 2020)

Thanksgiving

¹ Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2) Paul opens this letter with a description of himself and Timothy as bond servants.

3) There is a uniqueness about this particular greeting in the Philippian letter.

a) With the exception of this letter, 1/2 Thes., and Philemon Paul always makes mention of his being an apostle or in some other wording establishes his apostolic authority – in this letter he does not.

b) Two reasons are possible for this omission:

i) First, he may not have felt that it was necessary because of the closeness he felt with this congregation.

ii) Second, there are not issues that he must address here that warrant such a statement of authority.

4) We should also note here that the church has matured to the point of having elders and deacons.

5) Continuing with verse 3 ...

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work among you will complete it by the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this I pray, that your love may overflow still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may discover the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ; ¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.

¹ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 842.

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- 6) As one reads this introductory paragraph, one cannot help but see the depth of love Paul has for this church – yes and most assuredly those whom he knows personally.
- 7) He highlights several things in these few verses that really speak to his deep care for these folks:
 - a) In vs. 3, he is simply saying that he thanks God for them every time he remembers them.
 - b) In vs. 4, he prays for them often.
 - c) In vs. 5, he indicates that they had “participated” with him in the gospel from the beginning.
 - i) One assumes this is both in the caring prayers of this congregation as well as their financial support.
 - (1) As we will see, they have sent one of their members Epaphroditus to Paul during this prison stay presumably with some support.
 - ii) Again and bluntly, Paul was totally dependent on others for his rent, food, and other needs during this two-year imprisonment.
 - d) It is obvious that Paul considers these folks as partners in his ministry.

Considering our community / SW Ft. Worth and Altamesa, are we in partnership for the Gospel, for fellowship, or support?

In your opinion, what really gets the most of our efforts?

Gospel? Fellowship? Support?