

# Philippians Overview

## 1) Occasion:

This letter was written to a basically healthy church. It contains many things that were written for mature believers to grow them further.

There are many clues in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians that show us the occasion that Paul had in writing this letter. The main purpose for this letter seems to be to send thanks for a monetary gift. Paul seems to be referring to this gift when he calls the Philippians partners in verse 1:5. Paul also directly thanks them for their gift in verses 4:10-19. Paul also uses this epistle to admonish and teach this church in several areas such as unity, humility, contentment, proper conduct and proper views of self and citizenship. He tells them of his personal situation and feelings. He also encourages them with his peace and joy that he has in his situation. Paul also exercised his authority over the church in asking for a settlement of a dispute in the church between two women named Euodia and Syntyche in verses 4:2-3.

The Apostle Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter as he says in verses 1:7,13,14,17. Most likely, he was in Rome in or near the Imperial Palace because he had a lot of contact with Caesar's household (4:22) and the whole palace guard (1:13). He seems to be in danger of execution at any time as seen in verses 1:22-25.

The Philippian Church seems to be healthy because Paul has very few remarks of correction but mostly of encouragement and instruction in greater personal holiness. A few situations, however, can be seen such as the dispute between Euodia and Syntyche. There also seems to have been some false teachers in contact with the church such as the Judaizers mentioned in verses 3:2-3 and the Libertines mentioned in verses 3:18-19.

Paul also tells us about two other people, Timothy and Epaphroditus. Timothy is trusted and loved by Paul and is working with him. Timothy would stay with Paul a little while longer until Paul learns his situation but hopes to go soon to Philippi.

Epaphroditus is the messenger sent by the Philippians to Paul with the gift. He became ill almost to the point of death but God spared his life and he recovered. Epaphroditus is sent with this letter back to Philippi as the messenger and because he was anxious to see the Philippians.

## 2) Purposes for writing this letter:

- To give thanks for monetary support
- To commend Epaphroditus to the church
- To give them report and encouragement on his circumstances
- To give them instruction
- To deal with heresies (Judaizers and libertines)
- To deal with divisions in the church

### 3) Emotional tone of this letter:

The emotional tone of this letter is one of fatherly love and friendship.

Paul is not harsh with discipline but commends this church. He is very encouraging to them.

### 4) Themes and key phrases:

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Imitating Christ's humility

"But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ."

"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize."

"But our citizenship is in heaven"

"Rejoice in the Lord always"

### 5) Historical Background:

The city of Philippi itself was a chief city in Western Macedonia. It was a Roman colony with its citizens enjoying full citizenship of Rome. The Philippians were very proud of their Roman citizenship and they were very loyal to Rome. Paul used this idea of citizenship to show his idea of citizenship in heaven in verse 3:20. Women had high standing in this city. There were very few Jews in Philippi and there was no synagogue. Paul uses no Old Testament references in this letter.

The Church itself was founded by Paul responding to a divine call. It was the first church planted in Europe. This church seemed to be growing and flourishing. This church is one of Paul's personal favorites and this letter is one of his most personal.

This letter was written by Paul about A.D. 61-63. It was most likely written from Rome, but there is also good evidence that it was written from Ephesus. Paul is in prison and his judgement seems eminent and his death is very possible.

The occasion for writing this letter may be to commend Epaphroditus to the church as one who had fulfilled his responsibility fully and should be received. It may also serve to explain Paul's situation to those who were scared by his imprisonment. Paul says that his hardship was for a purpose to spread the Gospel and so encourages these people.

Paul also stresses the adequacy of Christ in all areas of life, including privation, persecution, hardship, suffering as well as prosperity. Paul also stresses the Joy and Triumph of serving Christ.

## 6) Outline:

- I. Whatever was profit I consider loss
  - A. Everything is loss compared to Greatness of knowing Christ
  - B. Have lost all things
  - C. Consider them rubbish
- II. Purpose is to gain Christ
  - A. Be found in him
    - 1. Not having righteousness from law
    - 2. But having righteousness from God
      - a. Comes from faith in Christ
      - b. Righteousness is by faith
- III. I want to know Christ
  - A. Power of his resurrection
  - B. Fellowship of sharing in his sufferings
  - C. becoming like him in his death
- IV. To attain to the resurrection of the dead

## 7) Paragraph titles:

- 1:1-2 Salutation
- 3-6 Thanksgiving
- 7-8 Paul's heart for Philippians
- 9-11 Prayer for growth in love and knowledge
- 12-14 Paul's chains for good purpose
- 15-18 People preaching Christ
- 18-26 Paul's trust in Christ in his situation
- 27-30 Behavior in unity as sign for unbelievers
- 2:1-4 Exhortation to humility and service of others
- 5-11 Christ's example of humility and service
- 12-13 Working with God to live out salvation
- 14-18 Pure lives as sign to unbelievers
- 19-24 Timothy's example
- 25-30 Epaphroditus's example and commendation
- 3:1 Rejoice
- 2-4 Warning against Judaizers
- 4-6 Paul's righteousness in flesh
- 7-11 Paul's righteousness regarded as trash compared to Christ
- 12-14 Pressing on for righteousness
- 15-16 Mature thinking will agree on this matter
- 17-21 Contrast of how to and not to live and hold priorities
- 4:1 How to stand firm
- 2-3 Handling division problem in church
- 4-7 Joy and peace in communion with God
- 8-9 Thinking and doing what is right
- 10-13 Paul's contentment in all situations
- 14-19 Thanks for gift
- 20 Benediction
- 21-22 Greetings
- 23 Blessing