

A LOOK AT THE BOOK PHILIPPIANS REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS!

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AUTHOR AND DATE

External and internal testimony combine to give strong evidence for Pauline authorship.

The letter was written during Paul's Roman imprisonment in about A.D. 60.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The church at Philippi was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey.

It was the first church founded in Macedonia following Paul's vision to go there and help them.

From the beginning the churches in that region **suffered persecution** on account of their faith.

The church appears to be **doctrinally sound** since no corrections are included.

They were a **generous** church, noted for their support of Paul and other brethren in need.

Paul has much praise for their positive characteristics.

This is an *ideal* church!

Nevertheless, **two problems** are revealed in the letter:

First, they are *discouraged*.

Times are hard.
They're suffering.
Their leader is in jail.
Their messenger to Paul is sick.
Everything seems to be going wrong.

Second, they are *divided*.

There is a personal conflict between two women in the church.

The larger problem of Judaistic divisions, between Judaizers and Gentiles, is evident here as in other places where Paul has ministered.

PURPOSE AND THEME

The two problems indicate the **two major purposes** of the letter:

1. Concerning the problem of discouragement, Paul writes to *encourage them* in the midst of their affliction.

Therefore he emphasizes *joy*.

2. Concerning the problem of divisions, Paul writes to *resolve the conflicts* between the brethren.

Therefore he emphasizes *unity*.

ORGANIZATION

The content of Philippians follows more closely the format of a personal letter than most books.

It contains nine main sections:

GREETING 1:1-2

Paul's greeting follows the normal three-part format, with general references to the author, recipients, and his personal greeting to them.

PRAYER FOR THEM 1:3-11

After his customary greeting, Paul shares his specific prayer for them.

THANKSGIVING 1:3-8

When he remembers them, Paul thanks God for the memories he has of them, and for the fellowship they have enjoyed together (1:3-5).

For the memories 1:3-4

For their fellowship 1:5

Paul praises God, because he's certain that God is going to continue to do the work in them that He has obviously begun (1:6-8).

Throughout the book, Paul's emphasis is on perfecting the good which he already sees in them.

Because of God's continuing work in them 1:6

Because of his love for them 1:7-8

PETITION THAT THEIR LOVE MIGHT GROW 1:9-11

His prayer for them is that the love which is already present might grow even greater.

Sphere of development 1:9

The love which he wants to see develop in us will be evident by its combination with knowledge and mature understanding—a discerning love.

Purpose of development 1:10

This will enable us to determine what is most important in life.

Cause of development 1:11

Such a manifestation can only come as the result of God's work in us to produce His own character. Therefore it results in praise to Him.

REPORT CONCERNING IMPRISONMENT 1:12-26

Paul sends a report concerning his situation in prison.

He wants them to know that what has served to discourage them, is not a discouragement to him.

3 Examples of the importance of God's perspective:

1. GOD WORKS THROUGH DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES -TO GLORIFY HIMSELF

God is at work in this too! --Encouragement

ADVANCE OF THE GOSPEL 1:12-14

God is using his imprisonment for His glory and to spread the gospel.

Testimony of Paul *in* the prison 1:12-13

The guards have come to realize that he is not in prison for a crime, but because of Jesus.

Testimony by others *outside* the prison 1:14

Even more significant, since Paul has been in prison, others have gained courage to speak concerning the Lord.

DIVISION AMONG THE PREACHERS 1:15-18

2. GOD WORKS THROUGH DIVISIVE CIRCUMSTANCES -TO GLORIFY HIMSELF

While there has been division among the preachers, that is not a cause for discouragement.

At least the gospel is being preached because of it.

Their attitude 1:15-17

If they are preaching to spite Paul, that's *their* problem.

His attitude 1:18

Paul will rejoice because people are hearing the gospel.

Two things Paul *doesn't* say:

- 1) He *doesn't* say, "Any old message will do!"
- 2) He *doesn't* say, "Praise God for their rotten attitudes!"

LIBERATION OF PAUL 1:19-26

Concerning his trial, Paul is convinced that he's soon going to be released.

3. GOD WORKS THROUGH DIVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES -TO GLORIFY HIMSELF

Means of salvation 1:19

This will end up in his deliverance—*whatever happens will be good!*

Either he'll be free to preach, OR he'll be home with the Lord!

Either way, he wins!

Desire for salvation 1:20-26

That he might not be embarrassed 1:20a

That he might not fail and bring God into disrepute.

He doesn't want to be a cause for people to think poorly of God.

That God might be glorified by life or death 1:20b-26

Either by his life or by his death, God will be glorified.

LIFE IS NOT THE GOAL!

His reason 1:20b-22a

1:21 To live = Christ
To die = gain

If he lives, it will produce more fruit 1:22a

His doubt 1:22b-24

Paul can't decide which to choose.

For himself, *death is the better option* because he'll be with the Lord.

But it's more important to remain, for *their* sake 1:24

[Therefore,]

His plan 1:25-26

Since he believes God still has a job for him to do, he expects God to release him.

This will be better for them because it will increase their confidence in the Lord.

Paul gives up what's best for him--for their good!

For Paul, the most important thing is to do God's will, for the benefit of the brethren.

EXHORTATIONS TO UNITY 1:27-2:18

Regardless of what happens to him, we need to conduct ourselves worthily of the gospel.

A series of five imperatives reveals the conduct Paul desires from us.

Most important is unity, which is reflected in all five exhortations.

CONDUCT YOURSELVES WORTHILY OF THE GOSPEL 1:27-30

We should stand firmly together so that we can help one another when confronted by opponents.

BE OF ONE MIND 2:1-4

We ought to be more concerned for one another than for ourselves and our own interests.

Motivation for unity 2:1

This should be sufficient.
It should be enough to make anyone happy!

Only one more thing is needed: to be of one mind—united.

Means of unity 2:2-4

What is our attitude when confronted by others who don't have the liberty to do the things we do?

Are we willing to give up our rights in order to avoid offending others?

THINK AS CHRIST THOUGHT 2:5-11

We should follow Christ's example and humble ourselves for the good of our brethren.

Didn't cling to equality with God 2:5-6
Gave up rights 2:7
Humbled Himself 2:8
Exalted by God 2:9-11

WORK OUT SALVATION 2:12-13

They ought to resolve the conflict they are currently facing and thereby demonstrate the work God is doing in their lives.

Work hard at this! (emphatic)–*take this seriously!*

–NOT eternal salvation from sin = "*Save yourselves.*"

–Not even to demonstrate externally the salvation that Christ has worked internally.

–Refers to deliverance from their current dilemma–the troublesome situation they are caught up in right now.

–As you have always obeyed

–In my presence or in my absence

–Reason: God is at work in you 2:13

He makes you want to –"*to will*"

He makes you able to –"*to act*"

DO EVERYTHING WITHOUT COMPLAINING 2:14-18

Finally, we should do everything without complaining and grumbling.

Such conduct will evidence to those around us the difference God has made in our lives.

Our appearing as lights in a crooked and perverse generation demonstrates that grumbling and complaining is normal, accepted behavior in the world.

It shouldn't be like that among us.

REPORT CONCERNING THEIR MINISTERS 2:19-30

Paul sends a report on those who have ministered in their midst.

They are used as examples of self-sacrifice for the good of others which we ought to imitate.

TIMOTHY 2:19-23

Paul wanted to send Timothy to them because of his personal example.

He cares for them.

He seeks the good of others.

He's a proven servant–not trying to get ahead.

PAUL 2:24

Paul hopes that he will soon be free to visit them personally.

He isn't trying to avoid pain and the problems of suffering.

EPAPHRODITUS 2:25-30

Epaphroditus is another example to imitate.

Paul is sending him back to them.

While he was there ill, he was more concerned about them than he was about himself, even though he nearly died.

Paul would rather keep him there, but he believes they need him worse.

Thus Paul will sacrifice his desires for them.

Again, the implication is that we should imitate his attitude.

INSTRUCTION CONCERNING TRUE SPIRITUALITY 3:1-21

Paul then deals with the problem of the Judaizers who have created problems at Phillipi just as they have in other places.

He responds to their view that spirituality is achieved by keeping the Mosaic law.

His instruction focuses on the nature of true spirituality.

WARNING AGAINST JUDAIZERS 3:1-2

Paul begins by warning them of the danger posed by the Judaizers.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE SPIRITUALITY 3:3

He contrasts their view of spirituality by law with the true view of spirituality.

Serving God in spirit

Those who are spiritual are those who serve God in spirit, not by letter.

Boasting in Christ

They boast in what Christ has done, not in their own accomplishments.

Not confiding in the flesh

They know better than to trust their own nature to produce fruit that will please God.

CAPACITY TO TRUST THE FLESH 3:4-6

Paul is not speaking as an outsider who is jealous because of their achievements.

If anyone could boast of their achievements, Paul could.

ATTITUDE CONCERNING ACCOMPLISHMENTS 3:7-21

Yet he realized his own failure.

He left everything behind and considered them as "leftovers," to gain the best.

Paul's loss 3:7-9

He considers his accomplishments to be worthless when compared with the possibility of having Jesus' righteousness applied to his account.

My "profits" (2x) I "account for" (3x) as "losses" (3x).

To gain Christ 3:7-8

To be righteous in Christ 3:9

Paul's goals 3:10-11

He doesn't replace his *old* activities with *different* activities!

Now Paul's goals are to know *Christ* better and to experience the power which raised Him from the dead in his own daily life.

Paul's progress 3:12-14

Paul recognizes that he hasn't yet arrived at perfection but he has his eyes on the goal and is progressing toward it.

Paul's exhortation 3:15-21

He urges the reader to agree on this same principle and to pursue the goal on the level where he is, just as Paul has done.

Agree on this principle 3:15

Walk on the level reached 3:16

Imitate those who walk as he does 3:17-21

SPECIFIC EXHORTATIONS 4:1-9

Concerning the presence of divisions and discouragement, Paul gives specific exhortations for them to follow.

STAND FIRM 4:1

We should stand firm in the Lord and not let circumstances shake us.

BE OF ONE MIND 4:2-3

We should resolve our differences and work together.

REJOICE IN THE LORD 4:4

Rather than be discouraged or criticize, we ought to praise God for what He has done for us.

BE GRACIOUS TO ALL MEN 4:5

We should establish a reputation for graciousness.

BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING 4:6-7

Rather than worry about our problems and needs, we should commit those things to God in prayer, thanking Him for what He has already done, and what He will do.

When we begin to live this way, we will be able to enjoy the protection of God's peace, instead of anxiety.

THINK PROPERLY 4:8

Their minds have been centered on themselves rather than on God.

We ought to focus on and think about the right things.

Everything included on Paul's list can be found in God and in His Son Jesus.

We should think less about ourselves and more about Him.

ACT PROPERLY 4:9

Paul also is concerned about our actions.

He urges us to practice the things that he has taught us and what we have watched him do.

Depression often results from sin in our lives.

If we want to experience God's peace, we must walk in a manner that will give us confidence to approach the Lord.

Then we can enjoy His peace.

THANKSGIVING FOR THEIR GIFT 4:10-19

The Philippians have sent an offering to help Paul.

He is grateful for their gift.

HIS GRATITUDE 4:10

HIS ATTITUDE 4:11-13

After expressing his gratitude for their gift, Paul uses the opportunity to teach us the proper attitude concerning money.

Having learned to trust the Lord, Paul is content to scrape by with bare necessities, as well as to have an overflow.

He has learned the secret of a contented life in either condition.

He can do all things through Christ.

HIS THANKS 4:14-19

Nevertheless, Paul doesn't want to be ungrateful.

He congratulates them for their sacrifice.

God knows what they have done and He will recompense their act of love.

Because they have sacrificed to help God's servant, God will meet their needs also.

For their gift 4:14

For their continuing support 4:15-16

His desire for them 4:17

His contentment 4:18

God's reward 4:19

CONCLUDING PERSONAL NOTES 4:20-23

PRAYER FOR GOD'S GLORY 4:20

Paul concludes the letter with a prayer that God will be glorified.

His prayer reflects what Paul expects to result from our application of the principles he has taught in the letter.

GREETINGS TO THE BRETHREN 4:21-22

BENEDICTION 4:23