

Book of Philippians

Title:

Philippians derives its name from the Greek city where the church to which it was addressed was located.

Philippi was the first town in Macedonia where Paul established a church.

Authorship:

The unanimous testimony of the early church was that the Apostle Paul wrote Philippians.

Nothing in the letter would have motivated a forger to write it.

The question of when Philippians was written cannot be separated from that of the place where it had been written.

The traditional view is that Philippians, along with the other Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon), was written during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome (ca. A.D. 60-62).

The most natural understanding of the references to the "praetorian guard" (1:13), and the "saints ... of Caesar's household" (4:22), is that Paul wrote from Rome, where the emperor lived.

The similarities between the detail of Paul's imprisonment given in Acts and in the Prison Epistles also argue that those epistles were written from Rome (e.g., Paul was guarded by soldiers, Acts 28:16; compare 1:13-14; was permitted to receive visitors, Acts 28:30; compare 4:18; and had the opportunity to preach the gospel, Acts 28:31; compare 1:12-14; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-4).

Background – Setting:

The city of Philippi.

The city was established by and named after, Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great.

After Octavian defeated Mark Antony's army at Actium (in 31 B.C.), Philippi was designated as a military colony with special privileges of citizenship.

This may account for the terminology used (in 1:27 *politeuesthe*), "to conduct oneself as a citizen", and (3:20) (*politeuma*, "citizenship").

Proud of their citizenship, its inhabitants called themselves "Romans" (Acts 16:21).

The official language was Latin, but the daily tongue was Greek.

According to (Acts 16:12), Philippi was the "chief city of that part of Macedonia."

Its importance lay not least in its being a crossroads lying on one of the main routes between Asia and Europe.

We will find many different things about this church at Philippi and the one in Corinth.

In fact, the first church meetings here, were held in Lydia's home.

Actually, Lydia and her family were the first converts to Christianity here.

We will find that Paul had been instructed directly from God to go to this area, because they needed help.

There was no synagogue in this area, and the women were praying out at the river bank where they washed.

They were there on the Sabbath, and Paul had gone there and he brought them the good news of the gospel.

It seemed Lydia was very prominent in the work here in Philippi.

The first man that was brought into the church here was the Philippian jailor and his family.

This city was said to be a Roman city in Greece.

This made this church a Gentile church.

There was not the problem with the Jews at this time, because they were not prominent in worship here.

Both Latin and Greek were spoken here in Phillip.

This was a poor church, but one that gave generously to help Paul.

This was the only church that Paul would take help from.

In this church, we see ministry of the women more prominent than in the other churches.

Paul, on one occasion, tells the church people to cooperate with the women that had ministered with him.

Historical:

Since it is primarily a practical letter, Philippians contains little historical material (there are no Old Testament quotes), apart from the momentous treatment of Paul's spiritual autobiography (3:4-7).

There is, likewise, little direct theological instruction, also with one momentous exception.

The magnificent passage describing Christ's humiliation and exaltation (2:5-11), contains some of the most profound and crucial teaching on the Lord Jesus Christ in all the Bible.

The major theme of pursuing Christlikeness, as the most defining element of spiritual growth and the one passion of Paul in his own life, is presented (in 3:12-14).

In spite of Paul's imprisonment, the dominant tone of the letter is joyful (1:4, 18, 25-26; 2:2, 16-18, 28; 3:1, 3; 4:1, 4, 10).

The planting of this church on his second missionary journey, was Paul's first act he has done on European soil.

The history of his mission there is recorded in (Acts 16:12-40).

His sojourn was brief but long enough for him to fall victim to abuse and punishment.

The power of his ministry was demonstrated in the deliverance of a demon possessed girl, in the conversion of Lydia and her household, and in the salvation of the jailer and his family.

To this small nucleus, others were later added: Epaphroditus (2:25-30), Euodias and Syntyche (4:2), Clement, an unnamed friend, and other "fellow laborers" (4:3).

Judging from these names the church seems to have been mostly Gentile.

The assembly was organized and then was under the oversight of its leaders, the bishops and deacons of (1:1).

The congregation at Philippi quickly became the dearest of all of the apostle's children that were in the faith.

While Paul's relationship with some fellowships (e.g. the Corinthians and the Galatians), was at times strained.

His relationship with the Philippians was apparently never marred by various misunderstandings or distrust.

"From the first day until now" (1:5), they had shared his interests, made his suffering their own, and participated with him in his ministry.

Twice they had sent him money at Thessalonica (4:16), once at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:9), and now again at Rome (4:18).

Their love for him (1:9), was reciprocated in full measure (1:7-8).

In the epistle he addresses them three times as "beloved" and calls them "brethren ... longed for, " and "my joy and crown" (4:1).

They are, on the whole, in good spiritual health.

Their only flaw is an apparent lack of complete harmony among some of their members.

Hence, Paul often summons them to unite (1:27; 2:1-4; 4:2-3).

And a potential danger lies in their enemies, thus occasioning the caution of (3:1 - 4:1).

Despite being under persecution (1:28), and experiencing suffering (1:29-30), they seem to be doing well.

Theme:

The basic theme of the epistle is joy.

This idea of rejoicing is found 16 times, appearing in noun forms (1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1), and verb forms (1:18, twice; 2:17, twice; 2:18 twice; 2:28; 3:1; 4:4, twice; 4:10).

There is ample basis for this theme throughout the letter.

There is joy in suffering, for through it, God accomplishes good (1:12-14).

There is joy in the sacrificial giving of oneself (2:17-18), and of one's goods (4:18), to meet the needs of others and to do God's will, thus following Jesus' example (2:4-11).

There is joy in knowing Christ and experiencing His resurrection power (3:8-10).

There is joy when harmony prevails among the brethren (2:4; 4:2-5).

And there is joy over the adequacy of Christ (4:13, 19), which produces contentment for every circumstance of life.