

Philippians

Authorship: This epistle was written by the apostle Paul while he was in prison (Perhaps while he was under house arrest in Rome).

Date: If the letter to the Philippians was written from Rome a likely date would fall in the early AD 60's.

Place in Canon: New Testament - Prison Epistle.

Genre: Letter

Unique Features: Paul rejoices with the life that he shares with the Philippians.

Background & Historical Situation: While Paul was in prison he apparently was feeling emotionally low and felt abandoned. He received a visitor from Philippi named Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus was sent by the church at Philippi with a gift for Paul. Epaphroditus had gotten ill along the way but completed the trip with more concern for Paul than for himself. Paul received the gift and the visit from Epaphroditus with joy. Most likely Epaphroditus began to tell Paul about the church at Philippi. Although they did not have the outward problems that many churches had they did have an internal problem of competitiveness. Because competitiveness centers in an overwhelming concern for self at the expense of others their main problem was selfishness.

Purpose: Paul appears to have a twofold purpose for writing this letter. First, he addresses the problem of competitiveness. In essence Paul tells the church at Philippi that God has given them a life to give away and that they should not stop giving it away. Second, Paul is thanking the Philippians for remembering him and sending Epaphroditus with a gift.

Key Passage: 2:1-11 This passage has two parts (2:1-4 and 2:5-11). Perhaps the most popular pericope (preaching selection) is 2:5-11. It is often referred to as the "Christ Hymn" or "Kenosis Hymn." However, the unity of these two parts is critical.

Key Word(s): Joy, Rejoice.

- Outline:**
- I. Introduction
 - A. Salutation
 - B. Prologue: Thanksgiving and Prayer
 - II. Biographical Prologue: Paul's Present Circumstances in Serving the Gospel (1:12-26)
 - A. Advance of the Gospel in Rome (1:12-18a)
 - B. Outlook Toward Death and Deliverance (1:18b-26)
 - III. Exhortations to a Lifestyle Worthy of the Gospel (1:27-2:30)
 - A. To Unity and Steadfastness (1:27-30)
 - B. To Christ-like Humility (2:1-11)
 - C. To Obedience and Blamelessness (2:12-16)
 - D. As Seen in Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus (2:17-30)
 - IV. Warnings against False Teachings Contrary to the Gospel (3:1-4:1)
 - A. Stand Firm against Self-Righteous Legalists (3:1-16)
 - B. Stand Firm against Self-Centered Libertines (3:17-4:1)
 - V. Further Exhortations to Application of Earlier Themes (4:2-9)
 - A. To Unity in the Cause of the Gospel (4:2-3)
 - B. To Joyful Peace in the Midst of Difficult Circumstances (4:4-7)
 - C. To Steadfastness in Thought and Practice (4:8-9)
 - VI. Personal Epilogue: Paul's Gratitude for Partnership in Spreading the Gospel (4:10-20)
 - A. For the Recent Gift (4:10-14)
 - B. For the Previous Gifts (4:15-20)
 - VII. Closing Salutation (4:21-23)
 - A. Greetings (4:21-22)
 - B. Benediction (4:23)

Structure: Even though Philippians does follow the Greco-Roman form of letter writing it has a very complex structure.

Sources:

Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998).
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