

An Overview of Philippians

Author and Audience

Paul was writing to the Philippian church (1:1), a church that he had founded on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6-40).

About 10 years had passed between the founding of the church in Acts 16 and the writing of the letter.

This was a church that Paul knew quite well. Paul wrote to them because they were discouraged and fearful because of Paul's imprisonment for preaching the gospel.

Date and Time of Writing

Philippians was probably written around 62 AD. Along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, Philippians is one of Paul's prison letters. Paul wrote from a Roman prison (1:7; 4:22) in either Caesarea, Ephesus, or Rome.

Purposes for Writing

1. Paul knows that the church is concerned for him, and he updates them of his situation (1:12, 4:10).
2. Paul wants to let the church know that and if he gets out of prison, he will come to see them (1:8, 1:21-27) and that Timothy and Epaphroditus are on the way (2:19-30).
3. Paul encourages the church to be unified because of the gospel (1:27-2:11).
4. Paul addresses the challenges from the Judaizers and others (3:1-21).
5. Paul wants to acknowledge the financial gift sent to him by the church (4:10-19).

Major Themes

1. We should partner with missionaries for the sake of the gospel (1:3-8; 2:19-30; 4:10-19).
2. We should be willing to suffer and die for the sake of the gospel (1:12-30).
3. We should have unity and humility because of the gospel (1:27-2:4; 4:2-3).
4. We should rejoice in Christ because of the gospel (1:18; 3:1; 4:4).
5. We should be content in all circumstances because of the gospel (4:11-13).

Structure¹

- 1:1-2 Introduction
- 1:3-11 Gratitude and Prayer for the Philippians
- 1:12-26 Paul's Personal Experiences
- 1:27-2:18 Appeals to the Philippians
- 2:19-30 The Visit of Two Friends
- 3:1-21 Warning Against False Teachers
- 4:1-9 Appeals for Unity, Prayer, and High-Mindedness
- 4:10-20 Gratitude for a Gift
- 4:21-23 Conclusion

¹from *The New Testament: Its Background and Message* by Thomas Lea and David Alan Black (2nd ed).