



The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians

Introduction

I. THE HUMAN AUTHOR OF PHILIPPIANS

A. The Complexity Stated

1. According to the book title, the apostle Paul is the human instrument used of the Lord to give the content of Philippians.
2. According to Philippians 1:1, Paul is listed alongside of Timotheus as one of the men present at the authoring of the epistle (see also Colossians 1:1).
 - a. The pronoun *us* in Philippians 3:17 seems to validate the idea that more than one man was involved in the giving of this epistle.
 - b. Yet, the singular pronouns throughout the epistle make it clear that the letter is predominately the work of one man.
3. According to the postscript, the letter was written by Epaphroditus. This makes sense in light of Philippians 2:25 and Philippians 4:18.

B. Understanding Paul's Manner

1. The common thought concerning Paul's epistles
 - a. Paul's salutation confirms his writing (2 Thessalonians 3:17).
 - b. A salutation, by definition, is thought to be the greeting at the beginning of a letter.
 - c. Paul's salutation always included his name and was found at the beginning of each epistle.
 - d. Epistles not opening with Paul's name were not his.
2. A proper understanding of the salutation
 - a. Paul did not personally pen most of his epistles (see Romans 16:22 and Galatians 6:11 and postscripts of First and Second Corinthians).
 - b. This allowed a letter to be written to the Thessalonians falsely claiming to be written by Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2).
 - c. Due to this, Paul handwrote the salutation (2 Thessalonians 3:17-18).
 - d. However, his salutation was not at the beginning, but at the end of his epistles. It was like us signing a letter that has been typed for us by someone else. The final signature gives authenticity to the letter. This is proven by the fact that all references in the epistles of Paul to the words *salute*, *saluteth*, or *salutation* occur in the last chapter.
 - e. Paul's salutation included a blessing of **grace** (see Romans 16:24; 1 Corinthians 16:23; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:24; Philippians 4:23; Colossians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:18; 1 Timothy 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 25; Hebrews 13:25).



II. THE TIME OF AUTHORSHIP

A. Paul's History at Philippi (see 1 Thessalonians 2:2)



1. From the book of Philippians, we can gather that the apostle Paul had physically and literally visited the believers at Philippi (Philippians 1:5, 26, 30; Philippians 2:12; Philippians 3:1, 18; Philippians 4:3, 9).
2. The record of Paul's visit is recorded in Acts chapter 16 and our understanding of that visit should be shaped by several important truths.
 - a. Paul was brought to the area by the Macedonian vision.
 - (1) Paul, Timotheus (Acts 16:1), Silas (Acts 16:25), and Luke (Acts 16:11—note the use of “we”) (among others) came to Philippi, a chief city of Macedonia and were in that city abiding certain days (Acts 16:12).
 - (2) A man of Macedonia prayed him, saying, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us” (Acts 16:9).
 - (3) The vision was thought to mean that the Lord had called him to preach the gospel unto the people of Macedonia (Acts 16:10).
 - b. His ministry found fruit among women (Acts 16:13-18).
 - (1) The conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:13-15)
 - a) On the Sabbath, Paul and his brethren went out by a river side and spoke to women who were there (Acts 16:13).
 - b) Lydia heard the apostle Paul as he spoke (Acts 16:14-15).
 - i) She was already a worshipper of God (Acts 16:14).
 - ii) The Lord had opened her heart (Acts 16:14).



- iii) She attended to the things Paul spoke (Acts 16:14).
 - iv) She and her household were baptized (Acts 16:15).
 - v) She constrained Paul and his fellowlabourers to abide in her house (Acts 16:15).
- (2) The deliverance of a damsel (Acts 16:16-18)
- a) As they went to prayer, a damsel met them (Acts 16:16-18).
 - i) She was possessed with a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16).
 - ii) She brought her masters much gain by soothsaying (Acts 16:16).
 - iii) She followed Paul and his brethren (Acts 16:17).
 - (a) Declaring them to be servants of the most high God
 - (b) Declaring that they were preaching salvation
 - iv) She did this for many days (Acts 16:18).
 - b) Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her (Acts 16:18).
 - i) He was grieved.
 - ii) He commanded the spirit to come out.
- (3) The spirit came out the same hour.
- c. He found himself in trouble with the people (Acts 16:19-24).
- (1) The girl's masters caught Paul and Silas and took them to the rulers (Acts 16:19).
 - (2) The rulers brought Paul and Silas to the magistrates (Acts 16:20-21).
 - a) Accusing them of troubling the city (Acts 16:20)
 - b) Accusing them of teaching unlawful customs (Acts 16:21)
 - (3) The people turned against Paul and Silas (Acts 16:22-23).
 - a) The multitude rose up against them (Acts 16:22).
 - b) The magistrates rent their clothes and commanded for Paul and Silas to be beaten (Acts 16:22).
 - c) They were beaten with many stripes (Acts 16:23).
 - (4) Paul and Silas were cast into prison (Acts 16:23-24).
- d. He saw the conversion of a jailor (Acts 16:25-34).
- (1) At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God and the prisoners heard them (Acts 16:25).
 - (2) There was a great earthquake and the foundations of the prison were shaken so that the doors opened and every one's bands were loosed (Acts 16:26).
 - (3) The keeper of the prison awoke and drew out his sword to kill himself supposing that the prisoners had been fled. He came and fell before Paul and Silas and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:27-30).
 - (4) They spake unto him and his house and they were baptized (Acts 16:32-33).
- e. He was released from jail (Acts 16:35-39).
- f. He visited with the brethren and departed (Acts 16:40).



B. Paul's Present Conditions

1. The timing of its writing

a. External hints

- (1) One means by which the timing of an epistle's authorship is gleaned involves the *postscripts*.
- (2) Each *postscript* provides pertinent information such as the location from where the epistle was sent. This noteworthy external information, along with the epistle's actual contents, helps to understand the general circumstances prevalent at the time of the writing of the epistles.
- (3) According to the postscript, Philippians was written from Rome. If this is true, and we believe it to be so, Paul did not write Philippians until sometime after Acts 28:16.
 - a) When Paul came to Rome, a centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul dwelt by himself with a soldier that kept him (Acts 28:16).
 - b) After three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together and told them he had committed nothing against them, but that for the hope of Israel, he was bound (Acts 28:17-20).
 - c) Many came to Paul in his lodging and he taught them of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus out of the law and the prophets (Acts 28:23).
 - d) Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus (Acts 28:30-31).

b. Internal hints

- (1) Paul was in bonds (Philippians 1:7, 12-17).
- (2) The people knew of Paul's suffering (Philippians 1:29-30).
- (3) Paul did not know what his future held (Philippians 2:23).
- (4) Paul said those of Caesar's household sent their salutations to the saints at Philippi (Philippians 4:22).

c. Comparative to other letters

(1) Written **after**

- a) First and Second Corinthians, written during Paul's second missionary journey
- b) First and Second Thessalonians, written during Paul's second missionary journey
- c) Romans, written during Paul's missionary journeys
- d) Galatians, written during Paul's missionary journeys but not completed and sent until Rome

(2) Written **with**

- a) Ephesians, written during initial imprisonment
- b) Colossians, written during initial imprisonment
- c) Philemon, written during initial imprisonment



- (3) Written **before**
 - a) Titus—This correspondence to Titus took place after Paul’s initial imprisonment which is confirmed by no mention of Paul’s bonds in the epistle to Titus.
 - b) First Timothy—During Paul’s journeys, post-initial imprisonment, he visited Laodicea.
 - c) Hebrews—Written when Paul returned to Rome
 - d) Second Timothy—Paul’s final epistle (2 Timothy 4:6) that, according to the postscript, was “written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the second time.”

III. THE STATISTICS

A. Of the Book—four chapters, 104 verses, and 2,183 words

B. Punctuation

1. Sentence ending (Seventy-eight sentences)
 - a. Seventy-seven telling sentences
 - b. One question (Philippians 1:18)
2. Mid-sentence
 - a. 208 commas
 - b. Twenty-nine colons
 - c. Twenty-seven semicolons

C. Key Words or Phrases

1. Words
 - a. Joy and rejoicing
 - (1) *Rejoice* appears ten times (Philippians 1:18; Philippians 2:16-18, 28; Philippians 3:1, 3; Philippians 4:4).
 - (2) *Rejoicing* appears one time (Philippians 1:26).
 - (3) *Rejoiced* appears one time (Philippians 4:10).
 - (4) *Joy* appears six times (Philippians 1:4, 25; Philippians 2:2, 17-18; Philippians 4:1).
 - b. *Gospel* appears nine times (Philippians 1:5, 7, 12, 17, 27; Philippians 2:22; Philippians 4:3, 15).
 - c. *Mind* and various forms appear twelve times (Philippians 1:27; Philippians 2:2-3, 5, 20; Philippians 3:15-16, 19; Philippians 4:2, 7).
 - d. *Fashion(ed)* appears two times (Philippians 2:8; Philippians 3:21).
2. Phrases
 - a. The day of Christ
 - (1) *The day of Jesus Christ* appears one time (Philippians 1:6).
 - (2) *The day of Christ* appears two times (Philippians 1:10; Philippians 2:16).
 - b. *Book of life* appears one time (Philippians 4:3).
 - c. *Peace of God* appears one time (Philippians 4:7).



IV. THE LAYOUT OF THE BOOK

A. In Comparison

1. Ephesians (emphasizes the body and its relation to the Head)
 - a. Speaks more of our position, walk, and relationships on earth
 - b. It is almost like an earthly view of the body of Christ.
2. Philippians (emphasizes the relation of the body to the body)
 - a. Speaks of the mind which controls thoughts, actions, moods, etc.
 - b. It was written to teach believers how to deal with and work with the rest of the body.
3. Colossians (emphasizes the Head and His relation to the body)
 - a. Has more references to Christ the Head and fewer for our walk
 - b. It is almost like a heavenly view of the body of Christ.

B. Independent

1. The opening address (Philippians 1:1-2)
2. Paul's concern for the Philippians (Philippians 1:3-26)
3. Exhortation and the example of Christ (Philippians 1:27–Philippians 2:18)
4. The example of Timothy (Philippians 2:19-24)
5. The example of Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-30)
6. Exhortation and the example of Paul (Philippians 3:1–Philippians 4:9)
7. The Philippians' concern for Paul (Philippians 4:10-19)
8. The salutation (Philippians 4:20-23)

V. THE THEME OF THE BOOK

A. Circumstances Cannot Hinder Joy

1. Regardless of bonds (Philippians 1:7)
2. Regardless of life or death (Philippians 1:21-23)
3. Regardless of suffering (Philippians 1:27-30)
4. Regardless of health (Philippians 2:26-30)
5. Regardless of gain (Philippians 3:4-7)
6. Regardless of adversaries (Philippians 3:17-19)
7. Regardless of cares (Philippians 4:6, 10-13)

B. Fellowship with God Yields True Joy

1. Prayer (Philippians 1:4)
2. The furtherance of the gospel (Philippians 1:12-18)
3. Faith (Philippians 1:25)
4. Humility (Philippians 2:1-11)
5. Knowing Christ (Philippians 3:7-11)
6. Contentment (Philippians 4:11)
7. Giving (Philippians 4:14-18)