

## Introduction to Philippians

Author:           Apostle Paul  
 Audience:       Church in Philippi  
 Date:             ≈ 62 A.D.<sup>1</sup>  
 Genre:            Letter

Paul was a highly educated Jew who also had a strong knowledge of Greek culture.<sup>2</sup> This background suited his calling well as the 13<sup>th</sup> apostle and missionary to the Gentiles. The Letter to the Philippians demonstrates Paul's ability to convey the Jewish worldview and faith to an audience with an almost exclusively pagan upbringing. Where other letters, like Galatians or Romans, feature heavy citations of Jewish scripture, there are no direct citations in Philippians and only a few allusions, all of which reference the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

Originally a Greek gold mining town, after Rome conquered Philippi (168-167 B.C.) and built the Via Egnatia (145-130 B.C.), Philippi became a primary stopping point along the main Roman route to the East. It was eventually colonized by military veterans (43 B.C.) and given equal rights with those granted to Italian cities.<sup>4</sup> The economic wealth of this city gave the church in Philippi ample opportunity to support Paul's missionary work, and Paul's letter to the Philippians could be referred to as a missionary support letter.<sup>5</sup>

### Literary Structure:<sup>6</sup>

- (1:1-11) Greeting and Prayer
- (1:12-30) Paul's Reflections on His Imprisonment
- (2:1-30) Exhortation to Humble Service
- (3:1-21) Where Does Righteousness Come From?
- (4:1-23) Concluding Exhortations and Thanksgiving

The Ministry of the Apostle Paul			
Location	Scripture Reference	Date	Letter Written
Damascus	Acts 9:1-19	A.D. 34-37	
Jerusalem	Acts 9:26-29	A.D. 37	
Tarsus	Acts 9:26-30	A.D. 37-45	
Antioch (Syria)	Acts 11:20-26	A.D. 45-46	
Jerusalem	Acts 11:27-30	A.D. 47	
1 <sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey	Acts 13-14	A.D. 48-49	Galatians
2 <sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey	Acts 16-18	A.D. 50-52	1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians
3 <sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey	Acts 18-21	A.D. 52-57	1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Romans
Caesarea/ Malta	Acts 23-26	A.D. 57-60	
To Rome (Under House Arrest)	Acts 27-28	A.D. 60-62	Colossians Philemon Ephesians <b>Philippians</b>
Greece?		A.D. 62-64	1 Timothy Titus 2 Timothy
Martyred in Rome?		A.D. 65	

Paul's letter exudes great joy, despite writing it while under house arrest.<sup>7</sup> Rather than being concerned for himself, he expresses great concern for the Philippians' fidelity to the Christian faith. He rejects the false teachers who elevate God's law above God himself (3:2-3), or who reject God's law and are a law unto themselves (3:18-19). Rather, he writes that we are empowered by God to obey God's law (2:12-13), and our proper obedience pleases God and enhances our mission to the world (2:14-15).

<sup>1</sup> The timeline of Paul's Ministry is adapted from F.F. Bruce "Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free" page 475

<sup>2</sup> In several parts of the letter, Paul appears to be paraphrasing pagan sources, cf. Phil 1:21, 2:17, 3:13-14, and 4:8. "Pagan Sources in the New Testament" J.D. Charles, pg 762, IVP Dictionary of the New Testament Background, edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter

<sup>3</sup> "Philippians" by Moises Silva, pg 835-835, Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament, edited by G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson. Phil 1:19/Job 13:16 (Greek), Phil 2:6-8/Gen 1:26 (Greek), Phil 2:9-11/Isa 45:18-23 (Greek), Phil 2:14-15/Deut 32:5 (Greek), Phil 4:18/Exod 29:18 (Greek).

<sup>4</sup> "Philippi" by L.M. McDonald, pg 787, IVP Dictionary of the New Testament Background, edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter

<sup>5</sup> ESV Study Bible notes, 2277

<sup>6</sup> The outline of Philippians is adapted from the ESV Study Bible notes, 2278-2279

<sup>7</sup> The word "joy" appears five times and "rejoice" appears nine times in the four short chapters of this letter.