

Philippians

Summary

The book of Philippians is a letter sent by the apostle Paul to the church in Philippi, which was in eastern Macedonia (modern-day Greece). In his second missionary trip (Acts 16:12-40), Paul ministered to the people of Philippi. This letter is written to the believers in Philippi who were devoted to his ministry and supporting him in his work. This letter is largely one of encouragement and hope, which is unlike many other letters of Paul because there is not a significant amount of critique. Paul is in prison as he writes this letter, and he seems led to encourage them to continue living boldly for Christ. There is a sense that Paul knows his days may be numbered, so he wants to thank the believers in Philippi for their support, to remind them to stay unified, and to encourage them to persevere to the end.

Author

The letter to the church in Philippi is attributed to the apostle Paul.

Date

The date given by most scholars for the letter to the Philippians is dated around A.D. 61 in Rome, although there is an alternative theory that it was written in A.D. 57-59 from Caesarea.

Primary Characters

Paul (Philippians 1-4)

Timothy (Philippians 2)

Epaphroditus (Philippians 2)

Historical Moments

Paul Writes His Letter to the Philippians (Philippians 1-4)

Paul's Imprisonment in Rome (Philippians 1)

Major Theological Themes

The Humility of Christ - In Philippians 2, Paul teaches how Christ's example of humility should be an inspiration to us. He teaches that if Jesus was God in flesh, and yet could not consider equality with the Father a thing to be grasped, then we should continuously be humbled by the greatness of God. When we truly understand the disparity between God and us it should lead us to be humbled and serve in the same manner in which Christ humbled Himself and served.

Suffering Is a Part of Life - Paul does not attempt to answer the question of how suffering can exist if God is all-powerful, but he does speak about how suffering is inevitable. Paul was in prison in Rome while writing this letter and was to be executed in only a few short years. He had suffered more beatings and persecution than we could ever imagine, yet he stood strong because for him, *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain* (Philippians 1:21). For Paul, the sufferings in this world could not overshadow the blessings in the next.

Lessons Learned from Philippians

The Church Must Stand United - One of the main purposes of the letter to the Philippians is to encourage the Church to stand together against opposition (Philippians 1:27-30) and from a division within the Church (Philippians 2:1-4), standing unified in Christ's example (Philippians 2:5-11). Paul knew that the Church would be the most important force for Christ's message to be spread and that this could only be accomplished through unity. Today, there are countless denominations and churches, but there is one bride of Christ. We must not let minor differences cause dissension. We should show grace and love that will lead to unity.

Beware of False Teaching - Oftentimes, we can see people changing their theological views due to culture, custom, or just personal viewpoint. One of Paul's strengths is his ability to take a step back and analyze whether something falls in line with Christ or if it is a compromise to the gospel message. Paul challenges the Judaizers in Philippians 3:2-11 and perfectionists in Philippians 3:12-4:1. We must always be immersed in Scripture and prayer so that we have the discernment to know what lines up with the message of Christ and what is false. Thankfully, in the twenty-first century, we have easy access to Scripture, but we need to take the time to read it.