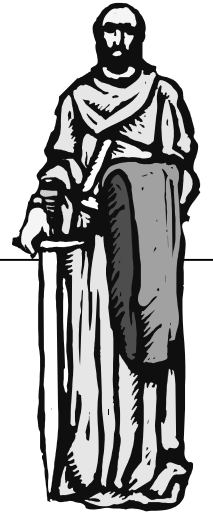


The Year of St. Paul



The Letter to the Philippi-

For a short letter of only four chapters and 104 verses, Paul's Letter to the Philippians is amazingly profound. At one level it is a poignant epistle from a jailed apostle to a beloved supporting church. At another level it contains an exhilarating hymn of Christ's humanity and exaltation, a glimpse into Paul's intense passion to know Christ. And a discerning reflection on prayer and the peace it brings. It's an upbeat letter, full of joy and rejoicing. But the lessons of faith and discipleship it teaches are not just feel-good. They are deep, enduring perspectives on how to face problems, stress, and struggle and grow through them, rather than wilting under the pressure. Philippians is powerful stuff!

THE CITY OF PHILIPPI

The Letter was written to Christians in the Macedonian city of Philippi. Its history goes back to 351 BC, when a number of Greek settlers took over the obscure Thracian village of Krenides ("springs"). Philip of Macedon, the Father of Alexander the Great, annexed the whole region in 356 BC and formally established Philippi as a city bearing his own name. It was fortified with

an extensive city wall, part of which still survives. A garrison stationed there made it a military strong point to guard gold from the nearby mines, which enriched Phillip by 1000 talents of gold each year. The Romans

conquered Macedonia in 168-167 BC. In 42 BC, Mark Antony and Octavian defeated the Roman Republican forces of Brutus and Cassius

(remembered as the assassins of Julius Caesar). The victors settled many of their veteran soldiers in Philippi and established it as a Roman colony, which grew still more when additional former soldiers were given land there.

Philippi was given the high honor of the *ius Italicum* ("law of Italy"), which meant that it was governed by Roman law, its citizens were Roman citizens, Latin was widely used, and its citizens wore Roman dress. In spite of a strong Roman influence, the city's religious life was quite diverse.

AUTHOR

Paul's authorship of Philippians was unanimously supported among the Church Fathers and has rarely been challenged in our day. Nearly all scholars accept this as a genuine letter of Paul.

DATE AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION

There is no unanimity on the date and place of composition of this letter. Clearly it was written by Paul when he was in prison (1:7, 13-14), a serious imprisonment (1:20-24, 30; 2:17) that expected to end in a trial that could result in his death if convicted. In their attempts to fit this imprisonment into a chronology of Paul's life, scholars have presented cogent arguments for each of three possible locations and dates:

GOD FIRST

Year Three, Part 19

December 7, 2008

OVERVIEW OF PHILIPPIANS

Opening (1:1-2)
Paul's prison letter (1:3-2:1a; 4:2-9)
 Thanksgiving and prayer (1:3-11)
 Paul's present and future situation (1:12-26)
Exhortation in unity (1:27-2:5)
The Hymn about Christ (2:6-11)
Further instruction (2:12-18)
Travel Plans (2:19-3:1)
Paul's argument against false teaching (3:1b-4:1)
 Paul's transformation (3:1b-11)
 His present struggle and future hope *3:12-4:1)
Exhortation to unity (4:2-9)
Paul's thank-you note (4:10-20)
Closing 4:21-23)

- Ephesus (ca. 54-55AD),
- Caesarea (57-59 AD), and
- Rome (60-62 AD), the traditional view, although not a widely accepted consideration.

Wheel taken from “Reading the Acts, Epistles and Revelation by Kingsley E. Dalpadado, OMI, St. Paul Editions

OCCASION AND PURPOSES

Paul’s immediate concerns in writing this letter are:

1. To recommend to the Philippians one of their number, Epaphroditus, who had come to help him in prison, but had fallen ill and was being sent home.
2. To let the concerned Philippians know about the current state of Paul’s welfare.
3. To prevent the Judaizers from persuading the Philippian Christians to submit to

circumcision.

4. To encourage the Philippian believers to quiet their dissention and be united.

Through the letter, however, Paul does much more than this. He provides the inspiration and encouragement of a friend, mentor, and fellow believer who finds Christ’s strength and peace while struggling with opponents, anxiety, physical needs, and fear for his life. To see how a man, an apostle, meets obstacles and overcomes them in Christ, makes this letter very relevant for our day, too.