

# Introduction to Philippians

## From The International Bible Society

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### Author, Date, and Place of Writing

The early church was unanimous in its testimony that Philippians was written by the apostle Paul (see [1:1](#)). Internally the letter reveals the stamp of genuineness. The many personal references of the author fit what we know of Paul from other NT books.

It is evident that Paul wrote the letter from prison (see [1:13–14](#)). Some have argued that this imprisonment took place in Ephesus, perhaps c. a.d. 53–55; others put it in Caesarea c. 57–59. Best evidence, however, favors Rome as the place of origin and the date as c. 61 (see chart, p. 2261). This fits well with the account of Paul's house arrest in [Ac 28:14–31](#). When he wrote Philippians, he was not in the Mamertine dungeon as he was when he wrote 2 Timothy. He was in his own rented house, where for two years he was free to impart the gospel to all who came to him.

### Purpose

Paul's primary purpose in writing this letter was to thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent him upon learning of his detention at Rome ([1:5](#); [4:10–19](#)). However, he makes use of this occasion to fulfill several other desires: (1) to report on his own circumstances ([1:12–26](#); [4:10–19](#)); (2) to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances ([1:27–30](#); [4:4](#)); (3) to exhort them to humility and unity ([2:1–11](#); [4:2–5](#)); (4) to commend Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippian church ([2:19–30](#)); and (5) to warn the Philippians against the Judaizers (legalists) and antinomians (libertines) among them ([ch. 3](#)).

### Recipients

The city of Philippi (see map, p. 2445) was named after King Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great. It was a prosperous Roman colony, which meant that the citizens of Philippi were also citizens of the city of Rome itself. They prided themselves on being Romans (see [Ac 16:21](#)), dressed like Romans and often spoke Latin. No doubt this was the background for Paul's reference to the believer's heavenly citizenship ([3:20–21](#)). Many of the Philippians were retired military men who had been given land in the vicinity and who in turn served as a military presence in this frontier city. That Philippi was a Roman colony may explain why there were not enough Jews there to permit the establishment of a synagogue and why Paul does not quote the OT in the Philippian letter.

# Characteristics

1. Philippians contains no OT quotations (but see note on [Job 13:16](#)).
  2. It is a missionary thank-you letter in which the missionary reports on the progress of his work.
  3. It manifests a particularly vigorous type of Christian living: (1) self-humbling ([2:1-4](#)); (2) pressing toward the goal ([3:13-14](#)); (3) lack of anxiety ([4:6](#)); (4) ability to do all things ([4:13](#)).
  4. It is outstanding as the NT letter of joy; the word "joy" in its various forms occurs some 16 times.
  5. It contains one of the most profound Christological passages in the NT ([2:5-11](#)). Yet, profound as it is, Paul includes it mainly for illustrative purposes.
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## Outline

- Greetings ([1:1-2](#))
- Thanksgiving and Prayer for the Philippians ([1:3-11](#))
- Paul's Personal Circumstances ([1:12-26](#))
- Exhortations ([1:27-2:18](#))
  - Living a Life Worthy of the Gospel ([1:27-30](#))
  - Following the Servant Attitude of Christ ([2:1-18](#))
- Paul's Associates in the Gospel ([2:19-30](#))
  - Timothy ([2:19-24](#))
  - Epaphroditus ([2:25-30](#))
- Warnings against Judaizers and Antinomians ([3:1-4:1](#))
  - Against Judaizers or Legalists ([3:1-16](#))
  - Against Antinomians or Libertines ([3:17-4:1](#))
- Final Exhortations, Thanks and Conclusion ([4:2-23](#))
  - Exhortations concerning Various Aspects of the Christian Life ([4:2-9](#))
  - Concluding Testimony and Repeated Thanks ([4:10-20](#))
  - Final Greetings and Benediction ([4:21-23](#))

## Philippians Chapter 1 (Part 1)

1. In the first verse, we get clued in that this was a co-authored letter/ epistle. Who were the two authors?
  
2. In the first century, all of these churches were relatively small – usually home-based churches. Yet, in the first verse, what 3 categories of believers are all listed in the plural tense?
  - Deacons come from the Greek word *diákonos* which means “minister”. Elder comes from the Greek word “*presbuteros*” which simply means an older man. Overseer or bishop comes from the Greek word “*epískopos*” which simply means overseer. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13. What are the qualifications for both Bishops/Overseers and what are the qualifications to be a deacon?
    - Read Titus 1:5-9. How are Overseers/ Bishops and Elders used interchangeably?
  
  - Read Acts 20:17-31. As Paul gives his farewell to the church in Ephesus, note that he calls for the elders and then indicates they were overseers who shepherd the flock. “Overseer” comes from the Greek word “*epískopos*” which some Bibles versions translate as “Bishop”. The word Pastor is the same word translated “shepherd” in scripture as well. So, not only in Ephesus, but also in Philippi (as noted in the first verse of the Epistle), what are found in plurality?
    - How does this often differ with the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
  
  - Read 1 Peter 5:1-2. How does Peter’s Epistle also have similar context to Acts 20 and in what manner does Peter also refer to himself?
  
  - Read James 5:14. What is listed in plural and what is listed in singular in his request to “call”?
  
  - Read Acts 14:23. How is the plural and singular also similar to the passage in James?
  
3. When reading Galatians, and the 2 letters to the church of Corinth, we read that Paul is frustrated with those churches in multiple areas. In contrast, what do we find in looking at his comments concerning the church in Philippi?