Introduction to Philippians

The City of Philippi

Luke refers to Philippi as "the leading city of the district of Macedonia" (Acts 16:12). The province of Macedonia was divided into four districts with each district having a leading city. Philippi was a strategic city for the Romans. It had the prestigious title "Colony of Julius Augusta Philippi *ius Italicum*," which was a most coveted title. *Ius Italicum* meant it was part of Italy and considered a Roman city with all the rights and privileges as such. It was exempt from paying taxes, had the right of land ownership, full civic rights, and its own administrators: *strategoi* "magistrates" (v. 22) and *lictores* "police sergeants" (v. 35; versus Roman appointed officials).[1]

The city was named after Philip II of Macedon (Alexander the Great's father), who took the city from the Thracians in 360 BC. He united all the city-states in northern Greece under his centralized control and formed the province of "Macedonia." The leading city, Philippi, was his namesake.[2]

Although rich in minerals, Philippi's ten-mile distance from the port of Neapolis lowered the city's commercial importance.[3] Philippi's renown came from the battles fought there. In 42 BC the imperial armies of Octavian and Antony fought and beat Brutus and Cassius. In 31 BC Octavian fought and beat Antony and Cleopatra. Soldiers from Octavian's army settled there to stabilize the area.

1. Lemerle 1945: 7–10. The NRSV is cited unless otherwise indicated.
2. van der Crabben 2009: "Philippi."
3. Strabo, *Geogr*. 7.331.

Founding Visit

While in Troas, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia asking for help (Acts 16:11–40). Luke recounts: "When he [Paul] had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them." The fact that Luke shifts from "he" to "we" at this point indicates that Paul met Luke in Troas. Luke reverts back to "he," once Paul moves on to Thessalonica (Acts 17). The fact that Luke stayed on at Philippi points to the city being Luke's hometown. As a doctor, this makes sense, since Philippi had a famous school of medicine with graduates throughout the Roman Empire.

Paul's travel to Macedonia marks the advance of the gospel into Europe. His missionary strategy emerged once he heeded the Macedonian man's call for help. Macedonia was about 10,000 square miles or roughly the size of Maryland. Therefore, some kind of strategic planning was needed. Acts 16–20 shows Paul's development of a three-pronged strategy. The first step was to identify the area's major urban center, which would allow for maximum evangelistic impact. When Paul moved on, he entrusted the spread of the gospel into surrounding areas to his urban converts (e.g., Epaphras and Colossae; Col 1:7; 4:12).

Paul's second step was the local synagogue (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:2, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8).[4] There he would find the most prepared audience, including both the pious Jew and Gentile "God-Fearers."[5] This also accords with Paul's policy of "to the Jew first." As God's chosen people historically, the Jews had a right to hear the gospel first (Rom 1:15). Paul's third step was to concentrate on the family unit as the nucleus of the church (e.g., 1 Cor 16:15). His letters commonly include greetings to the church that meets in a particular person's home (Rom 16:3, 5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2). This "household" church became Paul's base of operation and effective means of spreading the gospel. A "home" in Paul's day included more than immediate

4. The local synagogue was Paul's focus even before his call to Macedonia. As a visiting rabbi, he would automatically be asked to speak. The synagogue's leadership was in the hands of an administrator referred to as "ruler of the synagogue." The pastoral rabbi is a modern phenomena. There also were no religious elders to be found in the local synagogue. Elders in both Gentile and Jewish circles functioned as civic leaders.

5. The term "God-fearers" is used of non-Jews who attended the local synagogue and followed Jewish Law except for circumcision.

family members. Extended family, staff and frequent visitors resulted in a "household" that was comparable to the aristocratic estates of Europe.[6]

This three-pronged strategy is found in Acts 16:11–15. Philippi was "the leading city of its Macedonian district" (v. 12). On arriving in Philippi, Paul learned that Jews gathered for worship near a river. Jewish law required the presence of ten male heads of households to form a synagogue. Lacking that, a place of prayer under the open sky and near a body of water was chosen. Luke notes, "On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there" (v. 13). It was there that a woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, responded to the gospel message and invited the mission party to make her home their headquarters: "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home" (v. 15). The household of Lydia became the nucleus for the Philippian church. Lydia was a prominent Jewish business woman of financial means. She was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth (v. 14). The impact of her friendship and generosity on Paul can be seen from the fact that the church at Philippi was the only church from which Paul accepted personal support (Phil 4:15).

The Importance of Roman Citizenship

Barnabas, Paul's companion during their first evangelistic endeavor, had a parting of ways over John Mark's defection after evangelistic efforts on Cyprus (Acts 15:36–40). In his place, Paul chose Silas (Roman name Silvanus). Silas and Judas were selected as the Jerusalem church's representatives to return with Paul and Barnabas to the Gentile church at Antioch with the Jerusalem Council decree (Acts 15:27). Luke notes that Silas and Judas were prophets, who did much to encourage and strengthen the Antiochian believers (Acts 15:32). Luke further notes that Silas like Paul was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). Among other benefits, Roman citizenship provided protection against interference by local authorities.

Paul and Silas went through Syria and Cilicia, delivering the Council's decree and strengthening the churches (Acts 15:41). They also went to Derbe and to Lystra, where they met a convert named Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer and whose father was Greek. Because Timothy was highly recommended by both Lystra and Iconium believers, Paul

6. Martin 1996: 40–60.

added him to the team after he was circumcised (16:1–6).[7] It was the "trio" of Paul, Silas, and Timothy who set off for missionary work in Macedonia.

While in Philippi, Paul and Silas encountered strong opposition. Paul exorcised a demon from a slave girl, who had a spirit of divination that brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. The Greek is literally "the spirit of the Python" (*pneuma pythōna* Acts 16:16). According to the Greek myth, the Python was the serpent that inspired and guarded the oracle at Delphi. Although the creature was slain by the god Apollo, belief in a divining spirit remained.[8] The slave girl through her demonic spirit had insight into the identity and mission of Paul and his company: "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation" (v. 17). At some point Paul became annoyed enough to command the spirit in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her, and it did.[9] Her owners realizing that they had lost their means of financial gain, seized Paul and Si- las and dragged them before the local magistrates, claiming, "these men are Jews, who were disturbing the peace by advocating customs that are not lawful for the Roman citizens of Philippi to adopt or observe" (vv. 21–22). Their intent was to play on the anti-Semitism of the city and Philippi's pride in being a free Roman city. Although Judaism was an officially sanctioned religion, the lack of a synagogue (visible Jewish presence) combined with Philippi's status as a Roman city with autonomous governance put Paul and Silas at great risk. Even so, their Roman citizenship would have protected them. A Roman citizen could not be falsely charged, beaten, or jailed. Due process also required a fair trial with the right of appeal to Caesar.

However, neither Paul nor Silas claimed these rights. Instead the crowd joined in attacking them and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods (Acts 16:31). Afterwards

7. Luke's mention that Timothy's father was Greek explains why he was not circumcised. The fact that his mother was Jewish meant that in the eyes of society, Timothy was neither Jew nor Greek and would therefore not be accepted in either context. Circumcision normalized his social standing as a "Jew." This was critical for missionary work. Paul's policy of seeking out a synagogue in each city to which he went meant that Timothy would be accepted as a Jew. Jew-Gentile marriages were so rare that Timothy's situation would be well-known in his social circles. Luke states: "Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek" (Acts 16:30).

8. O'Toole 1996: 58.

9. Although some scholars view this record as unhistorical, there are others who defend the account in the light of Paul's own statements about his miraculous accomplishments (Rom 15:18–19; 2 Cor 12:11–13). See Lüdemann 1989: 189–91.

they were jailed, put in the innermost cell, and their feet fastened in the stocks (v. 32). Only at daybreak, when the city magistrates sent their police officers to release them with the order to go in peace, does Paul invoke Roman citizenship: "They have beaten us in public, uncondemned men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they going to discharge us in secret? Certainly not! Let them [the magistrates] come and take us out themselves" (v. 37). Luke notes that the magistrates "were afraid," when they heard that they were Roman citizens (vv. 38–39). So they came and apologized to them. Then they released them and asked them to leave the city (v. 39).

Opinions vary on why Paul waited to declare his Roman citizenship. A reasonable explanation can be found in the anti-Semitism and autonomy of Philippi. The fledgling church could be persecuted as an unauthorized gathering of those engaging in illegal, non-Roman practices. Paul and Silas guaranteed the church's protection. As long as Paul and Silas did not report their abuse as Roman citizens, the local magistrates would be indebted to them. Both beating and jailing a Roman citizen were serious offenses. Roman citizenship was a great privilege not easily obtained and the consequences were severe. Philippi's status as a Roman city could be removed and a Roman governor sent to replace the magistrates. Paul's and Silas's actions meant that the local magistrates would be slow to move against the church in the near future.

Paul's Situation

Paul's situation at the time of writing is clearly stated. He is in prison awaiting trial: "I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole praetorian [imperial] guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ" (Phil 1:12–13). He speaks of the outcome being life or death: "Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death" (1:20). He anticipates that the outcome will be life and that he will come visit them. This is based on the conviction that God has more work for him to do: "Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus, when I come to you again" (1:25–26).

The location and date of Paul's imprisonment has been debated. Traditionally the letter has been dated c. AD 61–62 and written in Rome. There is much to commend a Roman provenance. Mention of the "praetorian guard" fits with Rome (Phil 1:12–13).[10] "*We* sailed from Philippi" (Acts 20:6) indicates that Luke joined the Jerusalem collection's representatives at this point. "We" is also found during Paul's appeal to be tried in Caesar's court (which was his right as a Roman citizen) and during Paul's trip from Caesarea to Rome (Acts 27–28). Luke records that on arriving in Rome, Paul was a prisoner under house arrest (*custodia libera*) for about two years (Acts 28:30–31). He had a soldier guarding him (28:16), but he was free to send letters, to receive visitors, and to preach the gospel (vv. 17, 30–31). Paul's situation in Philippians of "imprisonment" indicates that he was moved to a place of confinement (perhaps in the barracks of the Praetorian Guard) and that his trial had begun ("in my defense" Phil 1:7). The fact that the verdict will be either life or death supports a trial before Caesar in Rome. Paul states that the entire imperial guard knew that he was in prison because of Christ (v. 13). Greetings are sent from believers in Caesar's household (4:22).[11] This would place Philippians after the writing of Colossians and Philemon. Paul's situation in Colossians and Philemon fits the ending of Acts, where his colleagues are free to come and go. "Epaphras, Mark Aristarchus, Demas and Luke" send greetings (Phlm 23–24; Col 4:10–16). The support for a Roman imprisonment origin is thus substantial.[12]

Some scholars have challenged a Roman origin for Philippians and suggested Ephesus, Caesarea, or a second Roman imprisonment as alternatives. The primary difficulty is one of distance from Rome to Philippi, which is hard to reconcile with a quick trip for Timothy as the letter carrier (2:19) and the return of the church's recently ill emissary and gift carrier, Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25–30; 4:15–20).[13]

10. Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.46; Suetonius, *Nero* 9; MM 1929: 553.

11. The Roman household included extended family, servants, business associates, visitors, and those under the owner's patronage. Caesar's household undoubtedly would have been extensive. Numerous household slaves and servants were needed to run a Roman household. See Martin 1996: 40–60.

12. See, for example, Buchanan 1964: 157–66; Reicke 1970: 277–86; Johnson 1956: 24–26 and most modern commentaries.

13. See Collange 1979: 155. Compare Burton 1896: 46-56 and Cassidy 2001: Introduction.

In 1900 H. Lisco first suggested that Paul may have written his letter to the Philippians from Ephesus (c. AD 54–57).[14] Since then a number of scholars have followed his lead and supplemented his suggestion with detailed arguments.[15] An Ephesian provenance is based on Paul's information in 2 Corinthians that he and his colleagues had a near-death experience traveling through Asia from Ephesus to Troas (2 Cor 1:8–10). However, Paul does not mention an imprisonment as he does in the so-called Prison Letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon). Also nothing in 2 Cor 1:8–10 supports the presence of an imperial guard in Ephesus or a trial. Further, the "we" language of 2 Corinthians means that Paul's colleague, Timothy, faced the same peril, while in Philippians, it is just Paul himself. Paul did face opposition in Ephesus from the local Artemis silversmiths, whose business was threatened, and they sought to stir up the crowd. However, the town clerk squashed the effort and pointed out that the courts are open and there are proconsuls to handle formal charges (Acts 19:38).

It is also argued that the imperial guard served as bodyguards for high-ranking officials such as a provincial governor. It is further noted that Timothy was with Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:22; Phil 1:1) and that his projected trip to Philippi from Ephesus harmonizes with Luke's recorded itinerary in Acts (Phil 2:19; cf. Acts 19:22). However, historians have documented their presence only during the era of the Roman Republic. With the transition to imperial Rome, the imperial guard praetorians served only the emperor.[16]

Issue is taken as well with the fact that Paul appears not to have been back to Philippi since his founding visit c. AD 50 (Phil 1:30 and 4:15–16). He does anticipate visiting them again (Phil 1:26; 2:12, 22) and, indeed, Luke places Paul in Macedonia after he leaves Ephesus in c. AD 56 (Acts 20:2a). It is argued that this would place Philippians after his AD 50 founding visit (Acts 16) and prior to his AD 56 return to Macedonia (Acts 20). However, a visit to Philippi is not specifically mentioned by Luke. Paul's intent was to collect monies for the Jerusalem church from all his churches and then to set sail with the churches' representatives to Jerusalem. In fact, Paul tells the Corinthian church that he plans to visit them *after* passing

14. Lisco 1900.

15. Collange 1979: 155; Wood 1877: 229; McNeile 1955: 182n3. Duncan argued the case strongly in 1955–1956: 163–66.

16. See, Smith 1875: "Praetoriani."

through Macedonia and perhaps even spend the winter in Corinth (1 Cor 16:5–6).

Mention is made of the successful collection of monies from the Macedonian churches (plural) in his c. AD 56 letter to the Corinthian church (2 Cor 8:1–5) as well as his plan to visit Corinth and collect their monies as well (2 Cor 8–9). Luke does record such a Corinthian stay, where he states that Paul "stayed for three months" (Acts 20:3). Luke also mentions Paul's plan to sail with the monies from Greece to Jerusalem but that he was informed of a plot against him: "He was about to set sail for Syria when a plot was made against him by the Jews" (Act 20:3). Instead he returned to Macedonia and set sail from there with the Jerusalem collection and the churches' representatives: "And so he decided to return through Macedonia. He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Beroea, by Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, by Gaius from Derbe, and by Timothy, as well as by Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia" (Acts 20:3–4). While at Corinth, Paul wrote to the Roman church about his plan after his Jerusalem visit to move into unchartered evangelistic territory west of Rome and perhaps as far as Spain (Rom 15:24–28). Caesarean (Acts 23–26) and Roman (Acts 27–28) imprisonments forestalled these plans. In Philippians, on the other hand, Paul anticipates a release from prison and speaks of further evangelistic work in Philippi (Phil 1:26). Plans can change. Five years passed between the writing of Romans (c. AD 57) and Paul's release from prison (c. AD 62). 1 Timothy and Titus indicate that Paul did not end up going west but returned east to engage in the further evangelistic work. This supports a c. AD 62 date for Philippians.

Caesarea is an attractive imprisonment option, given that Paul was held in the military barracks for two years.[17] Even so, Paul's mention of the Praetorian guard, an imprisonment, and a trial with a life or death verdict does not fit the account of events in Acts 23–26. Paul was taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea by the order of the military tribune for his protection against hostile Jews who sought to kill him (Acts 23:16–24). The charges brought by the Jews were dismissed as a sectarian religious matter. The centurion who transported him was ordered by Felix the procurator to keep Paul in custody but to let him have some liberty and not prevent any of his friends from taking care of his needs (Acts 24:23). When Felix learned that Paul was a Roman citizen (assuming wealth), he held him for two years

17. A Caesarean provenance for Philippians was first proposed by Heinrich E. G. Paulus in 1799. See also Johnson 1956–1957: 24–26 and Reicke 1970: 277–86.

hoping that Paul would bribe him. Wanting to curry favor with his Jewish subjects, Festus, Felix's successor, agreed to have Paul sent back to Jerusalem for trial. It is at this point that Paul appealed to his right as a Roman citizen to be tried before Caesar (Acts 25:10–12).

More recently Jim Reiher has proposed a second Roman imprisonment as the provenance of Philippians. Similarities between Philippians and 2 Timothy are noted. It is argued that an advanced ecclesiology, an impending sense of death, the mention of Luke, the word *desmios* regarding imprisonment (versus simply house arrest) and a desertion of co-workers are found only in Philippians and 2 Timothy.[18]

Yet, while the proposal is appealing, the similarities are overstated. In Philippians, Paul anticipates a release and return to Philippi versus a death verdict (Phil 1:25). To be sure, there is a lack of unity among the leadership (Phil 4:3). Yet, there are no deserting colleagues as one finds in 2 Timothy: "All who are in Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes" (1:15). "Demas has deserted me" (4:10). Paul does address the Philippian "overseers and deacons" (1:1). However, this is not a sign of an advanced ecclesiology. The terms "overseer" and "deacon" appear earlier in Paul's letters. Phoebe is identified as a deacon at the Cenchrean church (Rom 16:1). Also, the terms "overseer" and "elder" are not easily distinguished in Paul's letters. Paul appointed "elders" in all his churches to "oversee" spiritual matters (Acts 14:23). Nor are the terms "overseer" and "elder" easily distinguished even in 1 Timothy or Titus. In 1 Timothy the leadership is named as "overseers" (3:1) and "deacons" (3:8). In Titus, Paul commands him to appoint "elders" in all the towns, who are to "oversee" the churches that they planted (1:5–7). Further, the Greek word for imprisonment *desmios* is not unique to Philippians and 2 Timothy as Reiher claims. It is the term Paul also uses to describe his situation in Ephesians (3:1) and Philemon (1).

Integrity Issues

Three sections have been claimed by some to be insertions: (1) 2:6–11; (2) 2:19–24; and (3) 3:1b–19.[19]

18. Reiher 2012: 213–33.

19. See Dalton 1979: 97–102; Garland 1985: 141–73; Jewett 1970: 40–53.

Phil 2:6–11 has been regarded as an interpolation. The most common position is that these verses are an early Christian hymn cited by Paul at this point in the letter. (See the Excursus below.)

Phil 2:19–24 falls into the category of a travel narrative, which typically appears at the end of Greco-Roman letters. However, the concerns expressed in these verses could have prompted Paul to put it earlier. Paul announces the return of Epaphroditus but notes that his return has been delayed by a serious illness: "I think it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus—my brother and co-worker and fellow soldier, your messenger and minister to my needs. He was indeed so ill that he nearly died" (2:25–27). "Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy and honor such people, because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for those services that you could not give me" (2:29). This sounds like a defense on behalf of Epaphroditus and very similar to what Paul says about Onesimus in Philemon. The Philippian church may have become worried at Epaphoriditus' delay as he was carrying funds for Paul (4:10–20). Carrying a large sum of money was always a concern. Highway robbery was quite common in Paul's day: "I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits . . . in danger in the country" (2 Cor 11:26).[20]

Phil 3:1b–10 appears to be out of place with its so-called bitter severity and self-defense in light of the letter's overall theme of joy. Phil 3:1a begins with a *to loipon* commonly translated "finally": "Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard" (3:1 NRSV). The language of "writing" typically follows a notification of travel plans in the Greco-Roman letter. The outburst in Phil 3:1b: "Beware of the dogs; beware of the evil workers; beware of those who mutilate the flesh!" (NRSV) seems disconnected with what precedes. However, Paul's letters are notorious for abrupt changes. Virtually every letter has one or more such transitions. It could well be that Phil 3:1a marked a dictation pause or a letter disruption, during which time Paul learned of the arrival of Jewish agitators from Palestine intent on giving false evidence at his trial (or possibly at the hearing of his appeal).

20. 1 Corinthians is another example in which Paul attaches certain travel plans at the end of chapter 4 and the rest at the end of chapter 16. In chapter 1–4 Paul addresses itinerant preachers who are challenging his authority. He states that he "will come to [Corinth] soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power" (v. 19).

Even more, rigid (word-for-word) English translations can misrepresent the Greek. First, *to loipon* is used by Paul elsewhere to mark a transition to another topic (e.g., "Now for the rest"). Paul's use includes "from now on, in the future, henceforth" (1 Cor 7:29; Gal 6:17; 2 Tim 4:8), "beyond that"; in addition" (1 Cor 1:16; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:8; 1 Thess 4:1) and "furthermore" (1 Cor 4:2; BDAG s.v.). 1 Thess 4:1 is a case in point. Here *to loipon* introduces a change of topic: "In addition, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more" (NRSV). Yet, at verse 13 Paul moves on to still another topic: "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope." Similarly *to loipon* occurs in Phil 4:8 and is followed by fifteen additional verses on a completely new topic. Second, the present tense of the imperatives does not issue a new concern ("Beware of") but a concern of which Paul earlier apprised the Philippians: "*Continue* to look out for . . ." This makes "to write the same things to you is not burdensome" an introduction to what follows rather than a conclusion to what preceded in the letter. Third, paraenetic material commonly precedes the close of Paul's letters (e.g., Rom 12–15; Gal 5–6; Eph 4–6; Col 3–4; 1 Thess 4–5). So, its presence at this point in Philippians would be typical versus unusual.

Purpose in Writing

A call to rejoice despite their circumstances is Paul's first purpose in writing. The terms "rejoice" and "joy" are found fifteen times in Philippians' four chapters (1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17 (4x), 18, 28, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10). No other letter has these many occurrences. This is the theme of the letter. Paul did not accept financial support from any other church plant, indicating a close relationship with the Philippian church. This explains his "joy," when recalling their relationship. His affection for them is unlike that of any other church: "For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus" (1:8).

A call for unity is Paul's second purpose. Paul gets news that the church was facing strong opposition from within and without. In Phil 1:27–28 Paul instructs the church: "Whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one person for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any

way by those who oppose you." The church at Philippi was facing two obstacles. First, their founder was in prison facing a trial with a life or death verdict. Second, this made the opposition in Philippi "bold" and the church was fearful of the same thing happening to them. Rather than claiming his Roman citizenship rights, Paul allowed himself to be put in a Philippian prison to protect the church from future attacks (see above). However, now he was not able to do so. What he is able to do is to set before them the model of Christ, who sacrificed himself for them and gained the victory against his opponents through that sacrifice: "Be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind . . . with Christ as your example" (2:2, 5).[21]

Paul's third purpose in writing has to do with internal division. The church was divided about how to deal with external opposition. In particular there was a dispute between two key church leaders, Euodia and Syntyche, that was affecting the church's ability to face outside opposition with a united front (4:2–3): "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord." He also asks an unnamed "loyal companion" to "help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel."[22]

Paul's fourth purpose is to inform the church about upcoming travel plans: (1) He is sending Timothy (2:19–23). (2) He hopes to come himself at some point (v. 24). (3) He is also sending Epaphroditus back to them (2:25–30). Although Timothy was a member of the church-planting team, Paul provides his credentials. He also commends Epaphroditus and explains his delay. This may be an effort to address possible criticism. Perhaps there was some criticism that Epaphroditus had not completed his appointed task and was deserting Paul by returning to Philippi (2:25–30).[23] Providing Timothy's credentials is probably a reminder of the help that he can provide in light of internal and external opposition. Paul further anticipates his own return to Philippi and announces a hopeful visit (2:23–24).

Paul's final purpose is to thank them for the gifts that the church sent him via Epaphroditus. "I have been paid in full," Paul states, "and have more than enough. I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from

21. Peterlin 1995.

22. See Culpepper 1980: 349–58; Dahl 1995: 3–15.

23. Buchanan 1964: 157–66.

Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God" (4:10–20).[24]

Letter Structure

Philippians closely follows the structure of the first-century Hellenistic letter:[25]

- Letter Opening (1:1–2)
  - A (Sender) to B (Recipient),
  - Greeting/Health Wish
- Thanksgiving and Intercession (1:3–11): "I thank my God always . . ."
  - Thanksgiving (1:3–8)
  - Intercession (1:9–11)
- Body of the Letter
  - Body Opening (1:12–14)
    - Disclosure: "I want you to know . . ."
  - Body Middle (1:15—4:20) Advances the disclosure
    - Paul's Imprisonment and Trial (1:15–30)
    - A Call for Unity (2:1–18)
    - Upcoming Visit (2:19—3:1)
      - Travel Plans:
        - Timothy (vv. 19–23): "I hope to send Timothy to you . . ."
        - Paul (v. 24): "I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon . . ."
        - Epaphroditus (vv. 25–30): "I think it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus"
      - Expressions Urging Responsible Action:
        - "Welcome him in the Lord . . ." (v. 29)
        - "Risking his life to make up for those services that you could not give me" (v. 30)
      - Reference to Writing: "To write these things to you is not troublesome" (3:1a)
    - Paraenesis (3:1b—4:9)
      - A Command to continue to be on the lookout for the dogs . . . (3:2–21)

24. See Hagelberg 2007; Peterman 1997.
25. Doty 1973: 34–35; White 1986: 198–211.

Body Closing
- A Request for Leadership Unity (4:1–3)
- A Call for Ethical Conduct (4:4–9)
- A Thank-you Note (4:10–20)

Letter Closing (4:21–23)
- Greetings to: "Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus "
- Greetings from: "All God's people greet you"
- Goodbye/Health Wish: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit"