Authorship

The majority of scholars regard Pauline authorship of the letter to the church at Philippi as indisputable. This is due in large measure to its internal evidence. It is the most positive of Paul's letters and corresponds well with what is known about his relationship with the recipients as revealed elsewhere (cf. Acts 16; 2 Cor. 9:2; 11:9).

Date

Philippians is one of the so-called prison epistles. It was written toward the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment (which extended from A.D. 60-62), likely in late A.D. 61.

Historical Setting

Paul had been under house arrest in Rome for nearly two years as a result of his appeal to Caesar before Festus (cf. Acts 25). The church had become established throughout the empire, was becoming independent from Jewish association, and had not yet begun to experience much official persecution.

Original Readers

The church at Philippi, the first established by Paul in Macedonia, was the recipient of this letter.

Occasion

The most prominent circumstance occasioning Paul's letter was probably the apostle's sensitivity to the Philippians' concern over the well-being of Epaphroditus, the church's messenger, sent to aid Paul in his ministry (cf. 2:25-30). There are also indications that Paul wishes them to prepare for his and Timothy's arrival (cf. 2:19-24). Some disunity in the church may also have played a part in Paul's decision to write. Otherwise there is little by way of heresy or disorder to warrant the letter.

Message

Life lived as a citizen worthy of the heavenly kingdom will manifest the humility of Christ and realize his reward.

Outline

I.	Introductory greeting: Paul writes to the entire church at Philippi.							
	A.	Paul	and	Timothy write to the church as servants.	1:1			
	B.	Paul	and	Timothy greet the church with its elders and deacons.	1:2			
	C.	Paul	and	Timothy wish for the church grace and peace.	1:3			
II.	Prol	ogue:	Paul	relates his own experience for the church's encouragement.	1:4-26			
	A.	Paul prays for the church.						
		1.		Il thanks God for the Philippians' fellowship in the gospel.	1:4-8			
			a.	They had helped him from the beginning.	1:4-5			
			b.	They will be helped by God in the future.	1:6			
			c.	They are fellow partakers of grace.	1:7-8			
		2.	Pau	Il petitions God for the Philippians' spiritual progress.	1:9-11			
			a.	He prays for them to abound in love.	1:9			
			b.	He prays for them to continue in sincere faith.	1:10			
			c.	He prays for them to manifest the righteousness of				
				Christ.	1:11			
	B.	Paul	com	forts the church with respect to his condition.	1:12-26			
		1.	His	captivity has furthered the proclamation of the gospel.	1:12-18			
			a.	His captivity has been seen as for the cause of Christ.	1:12-13			
			b.	His captivity has encouraged Christians to testify of				
				Christ.	1:14			
			c.	His captivity has furthered the gospel despite the hostile				
				intents of some.	1:15-18			
		2.	His	captivity will soon end resulting in their benefit.	1:19-26			
			a.	He is confident that his testimony will remain effective.	1:19-20			
			b.	He is content to either remain with them or be with the				
				Lord.	1:21-23			
			c.	He is convinced that he will remain for their benefit.	1:24-26 1:27-4:1			
III.	Body: Paul commends conduct worthy of their heavenly citizenship.							
	A. Theme statement: In light of anticipated suffering, the believers							
		ought to be united in diligence in manifesting conduct worthy of						
				citizenship.	1:27-30			
		1.		eir citizenship ought to be worthy of the gospel.	1:27			
		2.		ey must not be terrified of their adversaries.	1:28			
	D	3.		ey have been granted the privilege of suffering for Christ.	1:29-30			
	В.		-	ment: The believer has sufficient resource and example to	2.1 2.17			
				citizen worthy of heaven.	2:1–3:16			
		1.		Il communicates the expectation of heavenly citizenship.	2:1-4			
			a.	The attitude expected is that of a mutual concern.	2:1-2			
				1) The basis is the work of God. 2) The expectation is like minded lave.	2:1			
			h	2) The expectation is like-minded love. The action expected is humility of mind.	2:2			
			b.	The action expected is humility of mind. 1) It esteems others as better than self.	2:3-4 2:3			
					2:3 2:4			
		2.	Day	,	∠. 4			
		۷.		Il commends the standard <i>par excellance</i> of heavenly zenship, Jesus Christ.	2:5-11			
				They are commanded to adopt the mind of Christ.	2:5			
			a.	They are commanded to adopt the millid of Cillist.	4.5			

			b. They are confronted with the numility of Christ.	2:6-8
			c. They are comforted with the exaltation of Christ.	2:9-11
		3.	Paul communicates the implications of heavenly citizenship.	2:12-18
			a. They are to give attention to their own spiritual	
			development.	2:12-13
			b. They are to reflect the character of God.	2:14-15
			1) They are not to grumble.	2:14
			2) They are to shine as lights in the world.	2:15
			3) They are to hold forth the word of life to the world.	2:16-18
		4.	Paul commends examples of heavenly citizenship.	2:19-3:16
			a. Timothy exemplified the humility of Christ through his	
			genuine care for the Philippians.	2:19-24
			1) He sought the welfare of the church.	2:19-21
			2) He served with Paul in an exemplary fashion.	2:22-24
			b. Epaphroditus exemplified the humility of Christ through	
			his distress over the church's anxiety on his behalf.	2:25-30
			1) He was a committed servant.	2:25
			2) He was a selfless servant.	2:26-30
			c. Paul exemplified the humility of Christ through a life of	
			sacrificial devotion to Jesus Christ.	3:1-16
			1) Paul was able to rejoice in his position regardless of	
			the opposition.	3:1-3
			2) Paul had forsaken all earthly privilege for Christ.	3:4-11
			3) Paul was pressing on toward the goal of Christ.	3:12-14
			4) Paul commends the same goal to the readers.	3:15-16
	C.	App	lication: Walk as a worthy citizen.	3:17-4:1
		1.	Paul commands them to live as he had been living.	3:17
		2.	Paul warns them of those who live for earthly things.	3:18-19
		3.	Paul reminds them that they are heavenly citizens.	3:20-21
			a. The Savior will appear from heaven.	3:20
			b. The Savior will transform the earthly body.	3:21
		4.	Paul exhorts them to stand fast.	4:1
IV.	Epil	ogue:	Paul exhorts and thanks the church in specific ways.	4:2-20
	A.	Paul	exhorts the church in various ways.	4:2-9
		1.	Unity is implored.	4:2-3
		2.	Rejoicing is commended.	4:4
		3.	Gentleness is expected.	4:5
		4.	Anxiety is to be replaced by the peace of God through prayer.	4:6-7
		5.	Meditation on the good will result in the presence of the God	
			of peace.	4:8-9
	В.	Paul	thanks the church for their material generosity.	4:10-20
		1.	Paul expresses thanks for their gift though he had not been	
		_	feeling needful.	4:10-14
		2.	Paul commends them for giving and assures them of its value	
		•	to God.	4:15-18
		3.	Paul assures them of God's continued supply.	4:19-20

4:21-23

V. Concluding greeting and blessing.

Message

Life lived as a citizen worthy of the heavenly kingdom will manifest the humility of Christ and realize his reward.

Argument

In this most positive of Paul's letters one is able to sense the overwhelming joy that results when believers participate together in the cause of Christ. Though the prospect of difficulty is not entirely absent in the Philippian situation, the overarching tone of the letter is one of joyful confidence in living the Christian life as one who is worthy of inclusion in the Father's heavenly kingdom. Whether things are going well, or just about to come undone, Philippians offers a reminder of what is most important on this side of the Christian's heavenly home.

I. Introductory greeting: Paul writes to the entire church at Philippi (1:1-3).

Paul takes the stance as a servant in his correspondence with a group dear to his heart. He and Timothy want the best for the Philippian believers and are overjoyed to offer themselves to the accomplishment of that end.

II. Prologue: Paul relates his own experience for the church's encouragement (1:4-26).

Paul has been in a Roman prison for the better part of two years and the church has been naturally concerned about his state. He begins by addressing this situation so as to put them at ease.

A. Paul prays for the church (1:4-11).

Paul recounts how he gives thanks for the church in light of their participation in his ministry of the gospel (1:4-8). He wants them to share his focus, which is decidedly not on his difficult circumstances but rather on the cause of Christ. His prayer for them is to increase in those qualities and activities that will glorify God (1:9-11).

B. Paul comforts the church with respect to his condition (1:12-26).

In order to put the church at ease about his condition he shares how all that has happened to him, good and bad, has actually turned out for the gospel's furtherance (1:12-18). His only concern is that he remain faithful to the opportunities given him to share Christ, that is, that he would maintain his boldness and thus be delivered ("saved," cf. 1:19) from

being ashamed. He is confident that their prayers for him will accomplish that end (1:19-21). Even though he knew that he could glorify God by life or death, he has a sense that he will remain on in this world for their benefit (1:22-26, cf. 2:24).

III. Body: Paul commends conduct worthy of their heavenly citizenship (1:27–4:1).

Paul now introduces the main theme of his letter, namely, conducting one's life as a citizen of heaven for the sake of the gospel of Christ.¹ They will need to be united in intent and confident in the face of persecution to live as a worthy citizen (1:27-29). They had Paul as an example of the possibility of that kind of a life (1:30).

B. Development: The believer has sufficient resources and examples to live as a citizen worthy of heaven (2:1–3:16).

The body of the epistle proceeds to develop the basic attitude of heavenly citizenship in terms of the attitude and behavior Lord Jesus Christ and those who have followed his example, specifically, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and Paul.

- 1. Paul communicates the expectation of heavenly citizenship (2:1-4). Paul picks up the "one mind" idea introduced in 1:27 and builds his main exhortation around it. The mind he refers to is the attitude which sets aside one's own rights and prerogatives for the benefit of another, that is, "humility (2:1-4). On the basis of what they already possess in Christ (1:1) this is a reasonable and realizable expectation.
- 2. Paul commends the standard *par excellence* of heavenly citizenship, Jesus Christ (2:5-11). The mind of humility is the mind of Christ (2:5). It is the attitude that motivated him to leave his rightful position of privilege and honor and become a human servant for the accomplishing of mankind's redemption (2:2-7). As a result he was exalted above all things to the glory of the Father (2:9-11). This is the standard by which believers are to measure true ambition (cf. 2:3).
- 3. Paul communicates the implications of heavenly citizenship (2:12-18). On the basis of this example, the readers are exhorted to deliver themselves from the selfish interests of the flesh and live as obedient citizens of the kingdom (2:12; cf. 2:3; 3:20). This is possible only because God is at work in them for this very purpose (2:13). Murmuring and disputing are counter-productive to this way of life which will result in a sterling testimony for Christ

¹ "Conduct" in 1:27 translates the Greek *politeuo* meaning "to live as a citizen," which forms an *inclusio* with the *politeuma* of 3:20, translated as "citizenship." Notice also the "stand fast in one spirit" of 1:27 and the "therefore . . . so stand fast . . ." in 4:1.

in a darkened world (2:14-16). No sacrifice is too great to make for such an undertaking (2:17-18).

4. Paul commends examples of heavenly citizenship (2:19–3:16). Three examples of this mind are readily available for the Philippians' consideration. They knew of Timothy's proven character, seen in his service with Paul on their behalf. Paul adds that he has no one so like-minded who would care for their needs (2:19-24). Likewise their own messenger Epaphroditus is so other centered that he was grieved over their grief over his own illness (2:25-30).

Thirdly, Paul holds himself forth as a example to follow (3:1-16; cf. 3:17). They should rejoice, despite those who glory in the flesh (3:1-3), because Paul has been able, by the grace of God, to overcome all such boasting (3:4-7). His pursuit is Christ as life indeed and life guaranteed (3:8-11). All other things in this life are comparable to garbage (3:8). His desire is to attain to the kind of life that displays the resurrection power of Jesus on a day to day basis (3:10-11). Though this is not a perfectly realizable goal here and now, it is none the less what Paul is making his continued and concerted objective (3:12-14). His desire is that the Philippians would have the same pursuit (3:15-16).

C. Application: Walk as a worthy citizen (3:17–4:1).

Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to follow his example, rather than those who set their minds on earthly things (3:17-19). By so doing they will conduct themselves in keeping with their true identity as subjects of the Father's heavenly kingdom (3:20) and will be continually buoyed by the hope of their ultimate glorification (3:21). To this end they must adhere steadfastly (4:1).

IV. Epilogue: Paul exhorts and thanks the church in specific ways (4:2-20).

Having concluded his main thought, Paul gives a number of exhortations. Two women need to be encouraged in the "same-mindedness" of which he has just spoken (4:2-3). The whole church needs to continue in a positive and winsome manner (4:4-5), protected by the peace of God (4:6-6) and experiencing the presence of the God of peace (4:8-9). What they are to do with their minds will be critical to both experiences (cf. 4:7-8).

B. Paul thanks the church for their material generosity (4:10-20).

Once again Paul expresses thanks for the Philippians' participation in his ministry, this time in the matter of providing material support (4:10). Though he has not been conscious of material need, they will benefit from their gift because it is a pleasant gift in

God's eyes (4:18). It simply manifests the gracious provision of the glorious Father (4:19-20).

V. Concluding greeting and blessing (4:21-23).

Paul concludes with two-way greetings, underscoring the theme of their mutual pursuit of all that the grace of God has made possible. There is little indication in this letter that the anticipated reunion between Paul and his "partners" in the gospel will be anything other than a very joyous occasion.

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