

Philippians - The Letter from Paul to the Church in Philippi

The letter of Philippians has four basic sections:

1. **1:12-26** - Paul explains his personal situation in Rome
 - a. This section is unique and interesting because Paul does not normally give such detail of his own situation in his letters. And, never does he begin his letters talking about himself.
 - b. The sharing of personal concerns and personal conditions indicates a unique relationship between Paul and the Philippians.
 - c. This is also fitting here since the Philippians have supported Paul financially in the past and are currently giving him a gift to pay for his daily needs. In this way information about Paul is also information about the man the Philippians are supporting.
 - d. Paul indicates his plan to visit which is discussed with more detail in **2:19-30**.
 - i. 2:19-30 does two things:
 1. Resumes Paul's personal report from 1:12-26.
 2. Reinforces the exhortation for 1:27-2:8 by using Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples for the Philippians to follow
2. **1:27-2:18** - Paul exhorts the Philippians to function in unity
 - . This may be considered as the heart of the letter.
 - a. Paul's intended message to the Philippians is found here, but the same message, along with application, is reengaged in **4:1-9**
 - b. It could seem as if 3:2-21 interrupts Paul's thoughts before closing the letter, so Paul had to return to his theme in 4:1-9 before saying his final thank you and good-bye.
3. **3:2-21** - Warning the Philippians of the legalistic Jewish teachers attempting to infiltrate
4. **4:8-20** - Paul thanks the Philippians for their financial gift

Philippians is not like other letters of Paul that can be divided into sections of theology and application.

The section about Christ divine/human nature as God/man (2:6-11) cannot be left standing alone without the context of the letter. 2:6-11 is a paragraph in the midst of the heart of the letter. The body of the letter is addressing the Philippian's problem of lack of unity. The reason for 2:6-11 is therefore to serve as an example. Indeed, it is great work for the foundation and development of Christology, but that is merely a result of secondary importance in Paul's letter here. The heart of the letter is focused on group unity through personal humility and selflessness (1:27; 2:1-4). The Philippians are to conform to Christ's example.

For maturity to be attained the Philippians are told several places that they will need to think correctly, know truth and understand what is right. Paul uses these words frequently in Philippians:

1. "Phroneo" - "think" - this verb in the Greek can be used in a variety of contexts which requires it to be translated in several different ways other than simply "think".

- a. 3:17 and 4:19 - Paul “thinks rightly” about the Philippians which means he has the correct frame of Mind or attitude toward them. They, likewise, should imitate his “right thinking.”
 - b. 2:2 (2x) and 4:2 - this verb is used to stress the unity of mind
 - c. 2:5 - the Philippians are to imitate Jesus’ own attitude (mind, thinking, etc.)
 - d. 3:15 (2x) - proper thinking is contrasted with the earthly thinking of the enemies of the cross
 - e. 4:10 (2x) - Paul commends the Philippians for having demonstrated they have the right attitude.
2. “Hegeomai” - ἠγεομαι - “consider” or “regard” -
 - a. 2:3
 - b. 2:6
 - c. 3:8
 3. “Skoepo - σκοοπτειω - “notice” or “consider”
 - a. 2:4
 - b. 3:17
 4. “Logizomai” - λογιζομαι - “reckon” or “consider”
 - a. 3:13
 - b. 4:8
 5. The use of words from forms of “knowledge” which always include the intellect, and then other aspects also.
 - a. 1:9-11
 - b. 3:8-10
 6. Athletic imagery which focus not on the strength of the body, but instead focus on the mind of the athlete involved in the competition with mental determination.
 - a. 1:27
 - b. 1:30
 - c. 3:12-14
 - i. 3:13-15 -run the race without looking back
 - d. 4:1
 - e. 4:3

This is summed up in 4:8:

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy- think about such things.”

The Philippians were facing challenges to their faith and were tempted to give up. But, they needed to persevere, stand fast and find joy by keeping their minds right and in the truth.