

The Book of Philippians -- Overview

Sermon 3 in the Philippians Series

Today, we take a big look at this little book. 4 Chapters. 104 verses.

It's a personal letter – an inspired thank you letter.

The scholars have criticized the book for its apparent lack of structure, some have even claimed Paul was rambling, others think it is 2 or 3 letters combined into one.

It appears to be a case where some of the more liberal scholars are out-thinking themselves.

Good, solid, conservative scholars like Silva, Hendricksen and others say otherwise:

O'Brien -- "A letter, written with the form and structure of a man who loves the people he is writing to – and speaking to them from his heart. And, of course, all of it is inspired by the Holy Spirit *and profitable to us for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness*".

I. God's Gift to Paul and the Philippians – a Godly Man

A. The gift of love brought from Philippi 4:14-18

Epaphroditus, he was a valuable man, both to Paul and to the Philippian church.

The Philippians had received word of Paul's imprisonment. They were concerned for their missionary. Paul does not call himself an Apostle in this epistle – there was no reason for him to exert his apostolic authority to these brethren.

Missionaries are encouraged when they are supported by folks on the home front. But, it is more than monetary support they need – they desire our prayers – they desire to know that we care about them. They love their work, and they love to tell us what God is doing in their field.

B. The gift Epaphroditus was to Paul 2:25-30

This is high praise indeed from the Apostle Paul.
My brother, my fellow-worker, and fellow-soldier.

C. The gift Epaphroditus was to the Philippian Church

II. Paul's Personal Reasons for writing to them

A. He writes to them about his present circumstances

1. He is in jail by the sovereign will of God and for the cause of the gospel 1:12-14

2. He rejoices that the gospel is being preached – even if some do it without any regard for him – as long as Christ is preached and preached in truth, Paul rejoices 1:15-18

B. He writes to them about his present state of mind

1. He is trusting in God alone knowing that Christ will gain for himself the ultimate victory whether by his life or his death. 1:19-21
2. Paul admits that he is not sure what would be best for him. 1:22-24
3. Since Paul believes that God's work for him on earth is not done, Paul expects to be delivered from his imprisonment. 1:25-26

III. The Heart of the Book 1:27-30

A. The pre-dominant themes of the book are found in these 4 verses.

1. Stand firm in the faith.
2. Be of one mind.
3. Stand strong, even in the midst of persecution.
4. There is also an allusion to citizenship

B. There are at least two more pre-dominant themes:

1. Joy -- which appears in some form 14 times.
2. The glories of Christ – which are hinted at here – and expounded more fully in chapter 2.

IV. Paul Warns about the Judaizers 3:2-3

V. Final Exhortations – Chapter 4

- A. Stand firm in the faith v. 1
- B. Be united – don't let Satan gain the advantage over you by petty quarrels v. 2-3
- C. Rejoice, be gentle, don't be anxious 4-7
- D. Focus on proper thinking, and a proper Christian example v. 8-9
- E. Paul expresses true Christian gratitude for their kindness to him. 10-23.