

PHILIPPIANS

All quotes and comments are by Morna Hooker unless otherwise noted.

- 1) Written in prison in Rome, Ephesus, or in Caesarea Maritima. If in Rome, probably 62 CE. If in Ephesus, probably 52-54 CE. If in Caesarea, probably in 60 CE. Philippi was Paul's first European church. City of approx. 10,000, on the Via Egnatia, which ran E-W from Byzantium on the Black Sea over 400 miles to Dyrrhachium on the Adriatic. Came under Roman rule in the 2nd century BCE, then refounded as a Roman colony when Antony and Octavian (later Caesar Augustus) defeated Brutus and Cassius in 42 BCE. When Paul arrived c 50 CE, it was mostly Greek but with a sizable nucleus of Roman citizens and was under Roman law. Latin was the official language. No archaeological evidence of Jewish presence. Luke, in Acts, makes no reference to a synagogue. The "place of prayer" has only women in it. So converts would have been entirely or almost entirely Gentiles.
Morna Hooker sees four different "opponents" referred to in this letter:
 - 1) 1:15-18 -- Those who personally opposed Paul but still were considered Christians
 - 2) 1:28-29 -- Pagan opponents and persecutors of the Philippians
 - 3) 3:2 -- Judaizers, either Jews or Gentiles. Or both.
 - 4) 3:18-19 -- libertines, "enemies of the cross."
- 2) 1:1 – To Paul, "in Christ" means "in the power of Christ." The term "saints in Christ Jesus" means those who were baptized into him, have metaphorically shared his death and resurrection, dying to old lives of sin, living with him a new life of righteousness. /// "Bishop" is synonymous with "elder" in all of Paul's letters. There was no hierarchy yet. "Deacon" is better translated "ministers," merely denoting someone who serves a Christian community.
- 3) 1:13 – Literally "praetorium," but not proof that the letter was written from Rome. The "praetorium" referred to either the imperial guard or to the building that housed them. Both would be found in any major Roman-controlled city.
- 4) 1:15-18 -- Those preaching "out of selfish ambition" -- probably not Gnostics or Judaizers -- probably like the people Paul attacked in 2 Corinthians who criticized him because they expected their leaders to be respected members of society, not subject to humiliation and/or imprisonment. If written from Rome, they might have been concerned that Paul was bringing them into conflict with the Roman authorities.
- 5) 1:19 – is an exact translation of the LXX version of Job 13:16, where Job expresses confidence in his vindication in a higher court. /// The Greek word "soteria" is here translated "deliverance" but in all other places in the Pauline corpus it is rendered "salvation." In the KJV, it is also "salvation."
- 6) 1:21-23 -- In Greek this sentence is particularly effective because of the similarity of sound: Christos, kerdos (gain), and carpos (fruitful).
- 7) 1:26 -- "Boasting" is proper, not "joy" as in the NIV. /// In Greek, "come" is "parousia," the same word used for the coming of Jesus in the end time, as well as in secular Greek, the triumphant entry of kings into cities.
- 8) 2:2 -- Paul is pleading for harmony in a church beginning to splinter.
- 9) 2:5-11. Probably quoting a familiar hymn of the time. (Vss 1-11 also parallels the Jews' Prayer of Adoration.) This is the first passage in Pauline literature to raise serious questions about the pre-existence of Christ. Here Paul is concerned with Christ's change in status, not what

he was doing in his pre-existent state. (Go to Col 1:15-20 for what he was doing.)

- 10) 2:6-7 -- "Something to be exploited" is "grasped" in most translations and was probably the power of omnipotence and omniscience, of which he voluntarily "emptied" himself in order to become human. This in contrast to Adam, who attempted to become like God by eating the forbidden fruit.
- 11) 2:9-10 -- The quote comes from Isaiah 45:23 (and Romans 14:11) and further drove a wedge between Hebrew Christians and Jews because Paul substituted Jesus for God in the quote.
- 12) 2:15 -- The quote "crooked and perverse generation" is from Deut 32:5, Moses' "farewell song," where the Israelites are described as "no children of God, a crooked and perverse generation," so Paul turns it around: Christians are to be God's children **in** a crooked and perverse generation.
- 13) 2:25-30. In the original Greek, it is clear that the meaning is this: the only thing lacking in the kindness the Philippians had shown Paul was their own presence. Epaphraditus had made up for this, and in so doing had nearly died as a result of an accident or illness received on his trip. Paul here originates the principal that one who has suffered in the service of Christ should have the final word in a dispute. In the century that followed, wise counsel was often overruled by the veto of a martyr, who though perhaps ignorant or fanatical, was given the final word.
- 14) 3:2 -- Mutilation -- circumcision, a righteousness of the law that Paul now considers worthless. Paul is probably attacking Judaizers, either Jewish Christians or Gentile converts who have accepted Judaism as a precursor to Christianity.
- 15) 3:8 -- Paul uses the word "skubalon" for what he has given up for Christ, "rubbish" also in the New American Bible and the NIV. The only English word that captures the vulgarity of the Greek is "shit."
- 16) 3:19 -- "stomach and shame" -- probably gluttony and illicit sex, not Judaizers, but this interpretation is not accepted by all scholars.
- 17) 4:2-3 -- "Loyal companion" is in the KJV, "yokefellow." Some think it may be Paul's wife -- perhaps Lydia, the seller of purple dye, but the adjective in the original Greek is masculine. Probably, then, Epaphroditus, Luke, or Silas (Silvanus).