

## 5. Paul's Letter to the Philippians

### I. The Letter Opening and the Thanksgiving (1:1-10)

- The senders: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ" (1:1a)
- The recipients: "All the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (1:1b)
- The greeting: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:2)
- The thanksgiving with a first mention of Paul's imprisonment for the sake of the gospel (1:3-11) A captivity epistle (1:7; 1:12-26; 4:12), one of four letters from prison written by Paul or in his name. 52 or 62? Ephesus or Rome?

### II. Reasons for This Occasional Letter

- Reassurance (1:12-26)
- Gratitude - For their gift and support (4:10-20) - For the service of Epaphroditus, who has been seriously ill (3:25-30)
- Encouragement for a church beleaguered from without - The need to stand firm (1:27-30) Paul's attack upon the opponents - Name-calling in 3:2-4 - More name-calling (3:18-19) - Don't be like them (3:20-21) The Example of Paul (3:7-12)
- Exhortation for a church with internal tensions 1) Be of one mind (2:3, 5; 3:15, 19; 4:2) - The great christological hymn (2:5-11) - Self-emptying (2:5b-8) - Exaltation (2:9-11) - Admonition for Euodia and Syntyche (4:2-3)

### III. One or Many Letters

- Some scholars say three letters - Their reason: shifts in thought and vocabulary - The letters: A letter of thanks (4:10-20) A letter delivered by Epaphroditus (1:1-3:1a; 4:2-9; 21-23) A letter attacking the opponents (3:1b-4:1)
- Most say one letter - The manuscript tradition - The freedom of the letter writer - The thematic and rhetorical unity of the letter

### Review Questions

1. Who are the bishops and overseers to whom Paul writes?
2. Why is Paul so grateful to the Philippians?
3. What does the great christological hymn of Philippians 2 teach us?