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## *Introduction*

The author of the epistle to the Philippians is the apostle Paul. The apostle was imprisoned, probably in Rome, when he wrote or dictated this letter.

We may assume that Philippi was the first city in Europe in which the Church of the Lord was established.

This history is described in detail for us in Acts 16. Around the middle of the first century, the apostle, on his second missionary journey, arrived for the first time in Philippi, the prominent city of Macedonia. He arrived there with several of his fellow workers through the special guidance of the Lord, namely by means of a vision.

Soon afterward a small congregation came into being, consisting of Lydia, the seller of purple goods, and her entire household, the prison guard and his family, and possibly several others as well, since Acts 16:40 speaks of "the brethren".

The statement "not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth"(1 Cor 1:26), also applies to this congregation. Yet, in spite of their small numbers and their

# *Outline 1*

## *The Apostle's Imprisonment*

*Phil 1:1-26*

### **A. Address, vv 1, 2**

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The letter starts in the usual manner: author, addressees, and votum.

Timothy is mentioned because he was in Rome with the apostle and was apparently in agreement with the contents of this letter.

It is striking that they call themselves merely servants (literally: slaves) of Christ Jesus. In many other letters the apostle places the authority of his office in the foreground. That is, in this case, not necessary: in Philippi no one doubted that authority.

“To all the saints” -pertains to the whole congregation; it does not refer to a kind of inward sanctification

but to the calling in Christ. (See also Rom 1:7.)

This is the only letter in which the apostle mentions the office-bearers separately. From the outset it is apparent that an excellent relationship exists between the apostle and the entire consistory and congregation at Philippi.

"Grace to you and peace" is an official address to the congregation. For it, faith is needed. If that faith is lacking in those to whom it is addressed, the greeting will return to the one who offered it (*cf.* Lk 10:5,6).

### **B. Thanksgiving and Prayer for the Fellowship of the Philippians, vv 3-11**

Paul sympathizes with all his congregations, often remembers them before the Lord in prayer, and rejoices over all the good things he hears about them.

The brothers and sisters in Philippi were close to the apostle's heart. Paul immediately points out that the congregation gave him much reason for joy. From the beginning the Philippians committed themselves fully to the preaching of the gospel. They did so by their hospitality to Paul and his helpers (see Acts 16:15 where mention is made of a compelling invitation by Lydia), and by their

2. *To “take part in the preaching of the gospel” is quite different from what we encounter in the complaint, “I did not get anything out of it”. It indicates an acceptance of the gospel, and thus also a labouring for it and an active supporting of it, for example, by means of prayers and gifts. Do we not often fall short here? Do we sufficiently understand that the preaching of the gospel concerns all of us? Does this not include mission work and evangelism as well?*
  
3. *Does verse 6 confirm the truth of the perseverance of the saints? (See Canons of Dort, ch 5.) It is clear that the perseverance of the saints is not simply “once a believer, always a believer”, but rather it includes the supplication “Do not forsake the work of Thy hand” (Ps 138:8).*
  
4. *Discernment (see v 10) is not only a gift, but is also a command! Is this related to the work of the study societies, especially those that search the scriptures?*
  
5. *Consider with verse 12 that periods of wealth and prosperity do not always mean that all is well, and vice versa: that adversity and suppression do not always indicate the decline of the church. The Lord*