Background to the Epistle to the Philippians

I. Paul’s Visits to Philippi

A. The Second Missionary Journey – Acts 16

They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go right or left, so they kept going west to Troas.

1. The Macedonian Call – (Paul’s dream) “Come over to Mace. and help us.” the good doctor, Luke, joins the party.

2. The traveling saleslady- Lydia.

3 The demon possessed girl.

4. The earthquake

5. The Philippian jailor – What must I do to be saved?

Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”

B. Exit from Philippi

1. Luke Stays with the New Church

The “they” passage in Acts 17:1

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to ﻿﻿Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.”

The writer of Acts, [Luke] is no longer with them.

2. The Gifts from Philippi – (Paul’s Testimony)

Philippians 4:15

“Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, [second journey] when I departed from Macedonia, ﻿﻿no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you [Phil.] only.”

2 Corinthians 11:9

Paul’s testimony: “And when I was present with you [Corinthians], and in need, ﻿﻿I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked ﻿﻿the brethren [Timothy and Silas] who came from Macedonia supplied. (See Phil. 4:15 - above)

Acts 18:3-5﻿  [Historical Record – 2nd Journey]

[Priscilla and Aquila] and because Paul was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them… ﻿But when ﻿﻿Silas and Timothy ﻿﻿came down from ﻿﻿Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly ﻿﻿testifying to the Jews that ﻿﻿Jesus was the ﻿﻿Christ. (ASV)

C. The Third Missionary Journey - Acts 20:1-6

“After the uproar in Ephesus…”

1. He Traveled through Macedonia - 2 Corinthians 2:12-13

 “Furthermore, ﻿﻿when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ’s gospel, and ﻿﻿a ﻿﻿door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.”

2 Corinthians 7:5

“For indeed, ﻿﻿when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but ﻿﻿we were troubled on every side. ﻿﻿Outside *were* conflicts, inside *were* fears.”

2. Three Months in Greece - Acts 20:3a

“Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to ﻿﻿Greece and stayed three months.”

3. Return to Syria through Macedonia - Acts 20:3b

And ﻿﻿when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

4. At Philippi Luke rejoined the party - Acts 20:6-7

“These men, going ahead, waited for us at ﻿﻿Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi after ﻿﻿the Days of Unleavened Bread.” (Also in v. 7)

Note the 1rd persons, “us” and “we”. The writer, Luke, has joined the party. He remained with Paul until Paul was martyred AD 65.

II. The Occasion for the Writing of Philippians

Philippians was a “thank you” letter for the gift the church sent by the hand of Epaphroditus. (4:18)

III. The Date and the Order of Philippians in the Writing of the Prison Epistles.

A. The Other Three Epistles – Eph. Col. Phile. were written and sent together.

Tychicus carried Ephesians.

 Epaphras carried Colossians

 Onesimus (or Epaphras) carried Philemon.

B. Philippians was Last for Several Reason:

1. Word had to get to the Philippians that Paul was in Prison.

2. They sent Epaphroditus with the gift. (4:18) Then he became sick while in Rome.

3. They had to learn that that Epaphroditus was .sick.

4. Word had to get back to Paul that they were concerned about his sickness. (2:26) since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

C. The Date – AD (BCE) 61-62

Paul’s Thanks for the Philippians

Philippians 1:1-7

Introduction: Greeting – 1:1-2

1. Author – 1:1a

“Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ”

Paul is the author. He includes Timothy because he is there and an important part of the ministry.

Bondservants - Paul often used his apostolic title when doctrine (Gal./Rom.) or practice (Corinth) of the church required correction. That was not the case here. The church was not perfect, but they were human.

1. Church – 1:1b

“To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the ﻿﻿bishops and ﻿﻿deacons”

Elders are not mentioned, maybe because the Elder/ Bishop/ Pastor was one office with three functions: teaching/ administration/ pastoring.

1. Greeting

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

In the prison Epistles Paul begins with “grace and peace” and ends with grace. In Philippians he will use “peace” at the end also. So in this series we have explained those two words often. Simply put, grace is God’s favor in spite of demerit. Peace is harmony – with God and each other. (See Rom. 5:1; 4: 6-9)

I. The Content of His Giving Thanks – 1:3, 5

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you… for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

A. It was for All of Them

“All” occurs 18 times in the book. That includes:

* Jailor
* Demon-possessed girl
* Euodia and Syntyche

B. It was for the Whole Remembrance

* Jail time
* Beating
* Ejection from the city
1. It was Specific

“for your fellowship” - κοινωνίᾳ - sharing - (see introduction)

They gave when no one else did. ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν = the present time or the now gift. Either is possible. I prefer the now gift.

II. The Companion of Giving Thanks – 1:4

“always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,”

Thanksgiving should not be alone: if you have been a blessing to me, I should be a blessing to you. What better blessing is there than prayer.

A. Requests – 1:4a

“making request for you”

* We need to pray for those for whom we are thankful.
* We have to be aware of the needs.
* We have to get to know each other.

B. Joy – 1:4b

“all with joy”

His prayer was with joy in spite of the circumstance. His circumstances made him better, not bitter.

“As holy joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise; So thankful praise is the lip and language of holy joy.” (Matthew Henry)

III. The Confidence of Giving Thanks – 1:6-7

A. Confidence in God – 1:6

“being confident of this very thing”

1. God Began the Work

“that He who has begun ﻿﻿a good work in you,”

There is no question that the One Who began the good work is God. There is, however, a question about what the good gift is.

Many use this verse to prove security of the believer, i.e.: to them the gift is salvation.

Is that what he has been talking about in this context?

It is their sharing in the gospel - their giving. Now, the principle is still true concerning any work that God starts.

2. God will Complete It.

“will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;”

B. Confidence in the Philippians - 1:7

“just as it is right for me to think this of you all,”

1. Paul had them in his Heart because I have you in my Heart

2. They had served with him in the Past – 1:7b

“inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel,”

They had been partners with Paul in the ministry both in his personal needs, and in the needs of the ministry.

3. They were Partakers of the Same Grace – 1:7c

“you all are my fellow-partakers of grace.”

Paul refers to his ministry as the grace given to him by God,

“The dispensation of the grace of God ﻿﻿which was given to me for you,” (Eph 3:2), “of which I became a minister ﻿﻿according to the gift of the grace of God.” (Eph 3:7), “To me, ﻿﻿who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles ﻿﻿the unsearchable riches of Christ.” (Eph 3:8)

With that in mind; Paul may well be saying that they have partaken in his ministry among the Gentiles by their giving, praying and helping him in his work of the gospel.