

# Paul's Epistle to the Philippians

## Introduction

### Historical Evidence

The testimonies of the historians of the Church and heretical writers give an unimpeachable authority to this Epistle. From the later 1<sup>st</sup> century there are the remembrances of Clement of Rome, but more direct evidence comes from Polycarp (69 – 155) who in his Epistle to the Philippians makes definite mention of it. Ignatius quoted from Paul's epistle in one of his own dating from around 107. The heretical Marcion (117 -?) had no doubt that it was by St. Paul, similarly later writers such as Tertullian ( 160 – 220+) and Clement of Alexandria ( d. c. 215). The Muratorian Canon ( c. 170) includes this epistle as one by Paul.

### Reasons for Writing

The church in Philippi was the first Christian church to be planted in Europe and Paul had a particular affection for it. In the letter Paul thanks the Philippians for their generous giving towards his maintenance, he applauds their steadfastness and gives profuse praise to them. There is no reprobation, only recurring thanks for the kindness they had shown to him. He does warn of false teachers who bring a spurious faith and gives a list of Christian commitments and promises given to those who believe through Jesus Christ.

### Date and Place of Writing

The Epistle was written by Paul 'in chains' – he was a prisoner. Paul was imprisoned three times – in Ephesus, Caesarea, and in Rome. The last of these three is most favoured. If Rome was the place of writing then the date would have been c. 61-63. There are around 40 ἄπαξ λεγόμενα, which, as I have shown in the introduction to the Epistle to Titus, increased in proportion as Paul aged and when he was writing to dear friends, and as here, to a much favoured church. It does appear that as Paul grew older, travelled more and as in this case, he had more time to read and carefully construct his letters and so was able to include the rarer words that had come into his vocabulary.