

Paul's letter to the Philippians



Boldness in sharing the gospel

Philippians 1:12-18



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1:12 ~ Paul's attitude toward his imprisonment

- **"Now"** (*de*) marks a transition into a new subject.
- The Philippians may have concluded that Paul's imprisonment meant his career as an apostle was over and his ministry ruined. Quite to the contrary, Paul viewed his circumstances as furthering the greater progress of the gospel.
- **"progress"** (*prokopē*) ~ cutting a path forward or driving forward by beating a way through. His ministry was not inhibited or obstructed.
- **"rather"** (*mallon*) ~ "more, to a greater extent, or to a higher degree." Paul's counterintuitive statement may have come as quite a shock to those who viewed his situation in a negative light.

1:13 ~ Paul's noteworthy case became widely known

- **“the cause of Christ”** ~ was being publicized everywhere as a result of his imprisonment. Detaining a man with such a righteous reputation would peak people's curiosity to find out why this was happening.
- Paul's situation **“has become well known”** (*phaneros*) ~ causing something to appear by bringing it into the light. The facts of Paul's surprising imprisonment brought the light of public attention to the cause of Christ.
- **“the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else”** ~ Apparently his circumstances were newsworthy and became generally known. It was quite significant that the whole Praetorian Guard was aware of his situation.

The Praetorian Guard



- When Paul appealed his case to the emperor (Acts 25:11-12), he would have been placed in the custody of the emperor's guard.
- **"praetorian guard"** ~ several thousand elite soldiers responsible for protecting the emperor and keeping peace in the empire ~ a sort of military police force. The Praetorians were quite influential, often involved in affairs of state such as naming a new emperor.
- Paul was probably chained to a Roman soldier twenty-four hours a day, so the members of the Praetorian Guard actually became Paul's prisoners for two years!
- Paul probably did not have direct contact with members of Caesar's household, so it is likely that converted members of the Praetorian Guard spread the gospel to the palace (4:22).

1:14 ~ Greater opportunity for sharing the gospel

- **“most”** (*pleiōn*) ~ “very many” or “the most part” of the brethren were **“trusting”** (*peithō*) in the Lord, where before they may have been reluctant.
- Public attention on Paul’s situation encouraged everyone to talk more openly about the reason for his imprisonment, which provided a platform for believers to share the gospel message.
- **“courage”** (*tolmaō*) ~ boldness, daring, or venturing to take a risk. This resulted in **“speaking”** (*laleō*) the message of Christ. This word does not mean “preach” but simply speaking in everyday conversation with others.
- **“without fear”** (*aphobōs*) ~ Rather than being terrified of reprisal, Paul’s imprisonment provided opportunities to speak out since many people desired to hear the news and understand the reason for it.

1:15 ~ Contrasting motives for sharing the gospel

- **“preaching Christ”** (*kērussō*) ~ formally proclaiming the gospel message.
- Two different approaches which reflected their attitude toward Paul personally:
 - **“envy”** (*phthonos*) ~ resentment toward someone because of what he has which you lack. A person who envies either covets what the other person has or wishes that those things would be taken away from the other person. In Paul’s case, his freedom of movement had been taken from him, and some were pleased about that fact.
 - **“good will”** (*eudokia*) ~ “to think well of,” describes their attitude toward Paul personally, rather than their thinking regarding the message of the gospel. Those believers were preaching Christ out of **partnership**, rather than **partisanship**.

1:16 ~ Those with proper motives

- “**love**” (*agapē*) ~ the proper motive. This type of love is self-sacrificing and always considers the best interests of others as its highest goal (1:9).
- These believers could see that God had “**appointed**” (*keimai*) or destined Paul for the defense of the gospel (see Acts 9:15-16).
- “**defense**” (*apologia*) ~ a legal term which means a reasoned statement or argument. In one sense, the gospel was on trial with Paul in Rome and the result of Paul’s case could potentially impact every believer.
- Some believers understood that they were “**partakers**” with Paul in the outcome of his legal defense and confirmation of the gospel (1:7). They could see the bigger picture and did everything they could to help Paul.

1:17 ~ Those with wrong motives

- “**selfish ambition**” (*eritheia*) ~ selfishness and putting oneself forward in contention for a higher position. It also includes the ideas of underhanded dealing, intrigue, and conspiring or “electioneering” to win an office, which implies the existence of factions, partisanship, and a party spirit within the Christian community at Rome. This is the *opposite* of having “**pure motives**” (*hagnōs*) ~ clean, honest, holy, and sincere.
- These small-minded believers were unable to see the bigger picture of God’s purpose for Paul’s imprisonment. Instead they were focusing only on themselves and what they might have to gain from his incarceration.
- The fact that Paul did not find fault with the content of their gospel preaching shows that their problem was not **doctrinal**, but **personal**.

1:18 ~ Paul's conclusion about these differences

- The differences in people's approach were the result of their personal feelings toward Paul himself. It may have caused Paul undue pain to see others reacting to him this way, but he clearly discerned that these were personal attacks rather than errors in the message of the gospel itself.
- **“pretense”** (*prophasis*) ~ pictures someone who wears a mask which hides the true state of things behind it. Those proclaiming Christ from selfish ambition were sharing the true gospel message while putting on a righteous front that concealed their inner motives.
- Paul **“rejoiced”** (*chairō*) because their wrong motives were hidden, while the gospel was clearly declared in **“truth”** (*alētheia*). How he himself was treated was not as important as how Christ was being proclaimed throughout the region.