

Exegetical Notes – Philippians 1:12-30

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Philippians 1:12-30

Verses 12-14

¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

- When Paul wrote Philippians, he was under arrest in Rome. His imprisonment had begun two years before in Caesarea, but his case had never been adjudicated. As a Roman citizen, he had appealed to the Emperor, and so his case had been sent to Rome to the Emperor's court. It had been more than two years. Though Paul was not locked away in a prison cell as he awaited trial in Rome, he was under house arrest. He was not free to go out into the city and preach the Gospel as he wanted.
- His life was at stake. Should the Emperor so decide, Paul could be executed. But he did not want his fellow believers to be so concerned about his fate that they stopped preaching the Gospel. So, he wrote to the Philippians telling them that what had happened to him, his arrest and his long imprisonment, had actually "served to advance the Gospel."
- Paul was guarded by Roman soldiers from the "palace guard." The words used here are the "praetorian guard." This was the police force that guarded the emperor, himself. It was the equivalent of our secret service. It was 9,000 men strong. Since Paul could not go out and preach the gospel to the people, he preached to his guards (see Ephesians 6:20). He was doing Matthew 28:18. As he was going about his life, he was seeking to make disciples from those with whom he came in contact. In this case, he was seeking to reach the imperial guard. Every one of them knew that Paul was imprisoned because he served and loved Jesus Christ.

- But other Christians had been emboldened by Paul's example, too. Seeing how Paul used the circumstances of his life and boldly preached Christ, they were also encouraged to be bold in their own living.
- So Paul's imprisonment had had two good effects. He preached Christ to the soldiers in the emperor's own household and other Christians were emboldened in their witness, too.

Verses 15-18a

¹⁵ It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ¹⁸ But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

- Paul openly acknowledged that not everyone who preaches Christ does so for the right reason. Some do it out of envy and rivalry. These preachers are motivated by selfish ambition. They do it for some personal gain. They hope, somehow, to stir up trouble for Paul by discrediting his preaching. They do not preach Christ in sincerity. But, some preach Christ out of love for Christ and the people He came to save.
- Paul says that the motive of the preaching does not matter so long as the preacher preaches the truth about Jesus. He rejoices, because the truth is preached.

Verses 18b-26

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. ²⁰ I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the

faith,²⁶ so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

- Paul affirmed that he would continue to rejoice despite what he faced, because he knew that he would be delivered from what he faced. He would be delivered by Jesus one way or another.
- He prayed that he would not be ashamed but remain faithful to God no matter how God chose to deliver him. God would deliver him by setting him free to continue his ministry here or God would deliver him by taking him home to heaven. He was certain of his deliverance but not of how it would come. For him, to live is to continue to preach Christ. For him, to die is to join Christ in paradise. He wanted to go home and to be with Christ, but he recognized that God might choose for him to remain here to strengthen the Church.
- While he struggled with all this, he was certain that he would be set free to resume his ministry here.

Verses 27-30

²⁷ Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

- Paul urged the Christians in Philippi to live the Gospel no matter what happened to him. He urged them to stand together in the Holy Spirit, united in preaching the gospel. He urged them not to become fearful of those who oppose them in preaching the gospel. The unity of the Church and its boldness in preaching the Gospel will show those who oppose them that they will be defeated and the Church will be triumphant. The battle belongs to the Lord!
- It has been granted to the Church the privilege of suffering for Christ (see James 1:2-4).

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