

A Commentary on Philippians 1:12-18

James W. Gunter

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Translation: Philippians 1:12-18a

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my affairs have turned out rather in the progress of the gospel,¹³ so that my imprisonment was manifest in Christ in the whole praetorium and all the rest,¹⁴ and most of the brethren, having trusted in the Lord through my imprisonment, dared more to speak the word without fear.¹⁵ To be sure, some even because of envy and strife, but some also because of good will, are preaching Christ.¹⁶ The latter from love, those knowing that I am appointed unto a defense of the gospel,¹⁷ but the others are proclaiming Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, those who think to raise up affliction because of my imprisonment.^{18a} What then? Only that by every way – whether by pretense, whether by truth – Christ is being proclaimed, and in this I am rejoicing.

Commentary

Verse 12 – Now I want you to know, brethren. This expression is commonly found in letters of Paul's day: "I want you to get this."¹ "Now" (δὲ) functions as a logical transitional.² "Brethren" (ἀδελφοί) should probably be rendered "brothers." Readings such as NIV '11, "brothers and sisters," rightly consider the full scope of humanity but lose categories of sonship and brotherhood which carried powerful meaning in the ancient world.³ The universal scope of the address may be best addressed by homily, not translation. – *that my affairs.* "That" (ὅτι) denotes substantial

¹ John MacArthur, *Philippians* (Moody Press, 2001), 58.

² H. A. A. Kennedy, "The Epistle to the Philippians," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. 3, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Eerdmans Printing Company, 1983), 422.

³ See also I-Jin Loh and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (United Bible Societies, 1977), 19.

content, introducing the content which Paul wants known.⁴ “My affairs” (τὰ κατ’ ἐμὲ) is literally “the things concerning me.”⁵ In late Greek, *κατὰ* became a regular periphrases for the genitive.⁶ The phrase is common in Josephus. – *have turned out rather in the progress of the gospel*. “Rather” (μᾶλλον)⁷ denotes the unexpected result that follows. “In” (μᾶλλον) explains where Paul’s affairs have come to: an unexpected place.⁸ “Turned out” (ἐλήλυθεν) is usually translated “came.”⁹ “Progress” (προκοπήν) refers to an advancement.¹⁰ Because “turned out” is active, the “progress” should be understood as, not simply in spite of, but through Paul’s circumstances.¹¹ Luke, a close associate of Paul, elsewhere depicts God to will suffering to birth evangelistic revival (cf. Acts 8:1-4; 11:19-21). Paul envisions divine wisdom as lofty and perfect above creaturely wisdom. Early Christian suffering, including martyrdom, functioned rhetorically and socially as a powerful

⁴ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 84.

⁵ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 4, *The Epistles of Paul* (Broadman Press, 1931), 437.

⁶ Kennedy, 422.

⁷ Though used for “more” in previous passage, “rather” is the appropriate usage here (Robertson, 437; O’Brien, 90).

⁸ “Instead of hindering and restricting his ministry, Paul’s difficult circumstances had done the very opposite” (MacArthur, 58). My translation “in” should therefore not be taken as spherical.

⁹ Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Baker Academic, 2005), 65.

¹⁰ Word found in New Testament only here, verse 25, and 1 Timothy 4:15. Also in LXX (Robertson, 438).

¹¹ See Silva, 62.

witness to Christ's lordship. In the weakness of persecution, the gospel message often finds its greatest advancements.¹²

Verse 13 – so that my imprisonment. “So that” (ὥστε) denotes adverbial result. L&N says this introduces the consequence of the gospel's progress.¹³ Silva counters that it is epexegetical, explaining the way the gospel has advanced.¹⁴ O'Brien agrees.¹⁵ I take the latter view: now Paul will expand upon verse 12.¹⁶ “My imprisonment” (τοὺς δεσμούς) is plural though with reference to the singular “imprisonment.” – *was manifest in Christ.* “Was” (γενέσθαι) is the first of two infinitives explaining what the progress of the Gospel has been.¹⁷ “Manifest” (φανερὸς) functions as a predicate nominative for δεσμούς (“imprisonment”).¹⁸ “In Christ” should be associated with the verb which follows (γενέσθαι).¹⁹ Every imprisonment Paul endured was “in Christ,” within the

¹² Peter clarifies that such “suffering” is not the pains of sin, but the pains of following Christ through persecution: “Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name” (1 Peter 4:15-16). The Christian attitude towards such suffering is a “patient enduring,” knowing that to share in Christ's suffering is a powerful sign that we shall likewise share in His comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

¹³ L&N, 20.

¹⁴ Silva, 65.

¹⁵ O'Brien, 91.

¹⁶ As I have argued above, how verse 8 relates to verse 7.

¹⁷ Second infinitive comes in verse 14.

¹⁸ Calvin prefers “illustrious” instead of “manifest” (John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. John Pringle (Baker Book House, 2009), 35).

¹⁹ Silva, 62; O'Brien, 91-92. Kennedy prefers to link the phrase with *desmous* (“imprisonment”), so reading, “my imprisonment in Christ was manifest in the whole praetorium” (423). The significance of Paul's statement is lost under this construction, for in it what remains to be clear is what exactly the praetorium are being

sphere of Christ, in particular His authority.²⁰ Paul was a prisoner of a greater Master (cf. Ephesians 3:1; 4:1).²¹ – *in the whole praetorium and all the rest*. “In” (ἐν) is locative, governing both objects which follow (πραιτωρίῳ, λοιποῖς). “Praetorium” (πραιτωρίῳ) transliterated from Latin.²² The word itself has four interpretive options²³ but must refer to the guardsmen themselves, as the parallel in verse 13 (“all the rest”) likewise refers to people.²⁴ This guard would have consisted of some 9,000 soldiers, who were paid well and carried great influence in Roman culture and politics.

made aware of. In my translation, “my imprisonment was manifest in Christ in the whole praetorium,” the manifestation itself is framed within the context of Christ, and thus we observe with clarity what the praetorium witness.

²⁰ Calvin says Paul has in mind the affairs or cause of Christ (Calvin, 35), but I submit he writes of His authority. The advancement of the gospel is itself the cause of Christ, whereas in verse 13 Paul is explaining how this cause is advanced. Paul saw the world under the rule and reign of Christ (Ephesians 1:20-21), as he will expound upon later (e.g. Philippians 2:1-11). This had a profound effect upon how he related to powers and principalities (cf. Luke 12:4-5).

²¹ Paul saw himself as marked-out by God for great persecution (Acts 20:23-24), as he once persecuted the church (Acts 9:1-6). For Paul, it was an honor to suffer in this way (Acts 21:11-13). He could say to his persecutors, “Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt... As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (Genesis 48:8; 50:20). Such imprisonment, under Christ’s authority, was Paul’s “distinctive honor” (Abrosiaster in *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, ed. Mark J. Edwards, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament VIII* [InterVarsity Press, 2005], 212).

²² L&N, 20. Used also in Matthew 27:27; Mark 15:16; John 18:28, 33; 19:9; Acts 25:35 referencing provincial government (Robertson, 423-24).

²³ See O’Brien, 93.

²⁴ See also MacArthur, 61.

Aside from grammatical parallels and linguistic references, Philippi's close mirroring of Rome and the high veteran populace makes the guardsmen an apparent interpretive option. Whereas, were Paul writing to a city not so accustomed to the culture of Rome, a reference to this elite guard might not be as favorable an interpretation as perhaps a reference to the palace or judicial system. "All the rest" could refer to those near or involved in Paul's imprisonment.²⁵ This would support Kennedy's position, that Paul had just been moved to the palace (see also Philippians 4:22).²⁶ O'Brien considers it a comprehensive reference, likely to pagans, but should not be rigorously interpreted.²⁷

Verse 14 – and most of the brethren. "Most" (πλείονας) is comparative, common in *Koine*. With the article, it denotes the superlative.²⁸ It should not be translated "many." Despite their improper motivations, Paul calls each category of preacher "brother."²⁹ – *having trusted in the Lord through my imprisonment.* "In the Lord" (ἐν κυρίῳ) comes before the verb, thereby

²⁵ See L&N, 20.

²⁶ Kennedy, 423. However, other details in Kennedy's position do not seem well grounded. For example, how did the Philippians learn about Paul's recent move to the palace, raise funds for his aid, send a letter with a messenger who nearly died on the way, and have Paul send a reply letter – all in the span of time that Paul was in the palace (which meant, apparently, that his trial was soon)? While Paul may have recently been moved to the palace, it must be recognized that the Philippians did not know this. Further, for the nature of Paul's imprisonment ("in Christ") to have been in anyway manifest in the "whole" guard (numbering 9,000), more time was probably needed than a somewhat brief imprisonment in the palace while the trial progressed.

²⁷ O'Brien, 94.

²⁸ Robertson 438; O'Brien, 94.

²⁹ Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1983), 34.

emphasized. L&N agree, citing such an association in 2:24.³⁰ Silva and O’Brien agree: the alternate construction (“my imprisonment in the Lord”) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.³¹ “Through my imprisonment” (τοῖς δεσμοῖς) is a dative noun, but its nature is debated. L&N suppose it a dative of cause.³² Robertson disagrees, advocating for the instrumental use.³³ O’Brien agrees with Robertson: “in the Lord” is the ground, and “imprisonment” the means.³⁴ I take the latter view. The Lord is Who they trust, the imprisonment is the situational means by which they trust.³⁵ – *dared more to speak the word without fear*. “To speak the word” (τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν) should be considered contextually synonymous with τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουσιν (“preaching Christ,” v.15), τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν (“preaching Christ,” v.17), and Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται (“Christ is being proclaimed,” v.18a). Paul’s bold preaching flows from, and is not tampered by, persecution (Acts 5:41-42).

Verse 15 – To be sure, some even because of envy and strife. “To be sure” (μὲν) expresses certainty: “it is true.”³⁶ “Some” (Τινὲς) is a subset of “most” (πλείονας, v.14, in reference to “the brethren”). L&N concurs, explaining that these brothers are “pro-Christ” but “anti-Paul.”³⁷ O’Brien likewise prefers this option: Paul now describes two subsets of the majority referenced in

³⁰ L&N, 21. “And I trust in the Lord that myself also will be coming shortly” (Philippians 2:24).

³¹ Silva, 66; O’Brien, 94. Kennedy disagrees (424).

³² L&N, 21.

³³ Robertson, 438.

³⁴ O’Brien, 95.

³⁵ Silva considers the entire discussion irrelevant (66).

³⁶ L&N, 22.

³⁷ L&N, 22. This quote from L&N may describe my position (see excursus below).

verse 14.³⁸ Silva takes middle of the road, recognizing the salvation and gospel-preaching of these fellows, but leery of what he (and Kennedy) see as a contradiction between verses 14 and 17.³⁹ “Because of” (διὰ) is with the accusative, denoting grounds and not means. Therefore, in verse 15 Paul articulates the two reasons which two groups respectively preach. L&N goes so far as to call “envy” and “strife” predicate nominatives, describing these preachers.⁴⁰ This is unnecessary. “Envy” (φθόνον) describes someone who loves controversy. Same word used of those handing Christ over to Pilate.⁴¹ “Strife” (ἔρις) may imply “rivalry.”⁴² Silva is wise to suggest that many terms in verses 15-18 are contextual synonyms – it would be a mistake to mark sharp distinctions. “Envy and Strife” should be seen synonymous with “selfish ambition” (v.17).⁴³ The identity of these contentious men is not widely agreed upon. See my excursus below titled, “The Identity and Motivation of These Preachers.” – *but some also because of good will, are preaching Christ*. These two groups are grammatical parallels in Greek (see below). “Good will” (εὐδοκίαν) is used elsewhere in Scripture of both God’s desire (e.g. Matthew 11:26) and a person’s desire (e.g.

³⁸ O’Brien, 98.

³⁹ Silva, 63; Kennedy, 424-25. This being the case, Silva sees an emphatic force present in καὶ (“even”) which I deny. καὶ functions here as a logical ascensive, with emphasis equivalent to the third καὶ in verse 15, which refers to the latter group.

⁴⁰ L&N, 23.

⁴¹ cf. Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10 (O’Brien, 99). Paul may have intended a parallel with the reference in Matthew’s gospel, as we know he eventually had access to a copy (cf. 1 Timothy 5:18).

⁴² Kennedy, 424.

⁴³ Silva, 66. L&N makes this observation regarding terms for “proclamation” or “preaching.” (L&N, 22)

Romans 10:1).⁴⁴ O’Brien claims εὐδοκίαν refers to God’s good choice to have Paul in prison.⁴⁵ This would dismantle the parallel between verse 15a and 15b, where “envy and strife” points to something within Τινὲς (“some”). Robertson claims it refers to good will towards Paul.⁴⁶ L&N acknowledge this possibility but only commit to its referencing good will towards the gospel.⁴⁷ I agree with Robertson.

Excursus: Structure of Verses 16-17 – KJV follows TR in reverse order of verses 16-17, perhaps to align with verse 15. Reading not attested earlier than sixth century. Silva describes the situation as “a convincing example of the tendency to smooth what may have appeared stylistically awkward to some scribes.”⁴⁸ Taking note of this error is important due to the chiastic structure of verses 15-17.⁴⁹ The USB 4th reads:

A₁ // Τινὲς μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν

B₁ // τινὲς δὲ καὶ δι’ εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουν

B₂ // οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογία τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κεῖμαι

A₂ // οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἄγνως, οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου

In contrast, the KJV represents an ABAB reading. The ill-motivated preachers form “A” and the well-motivated preachers form “B.” The chiastic structure seems to emphasize the ill-motivated

⁴⁴ L&N, 23.

⁴⁵ O’Brien, 99-100.

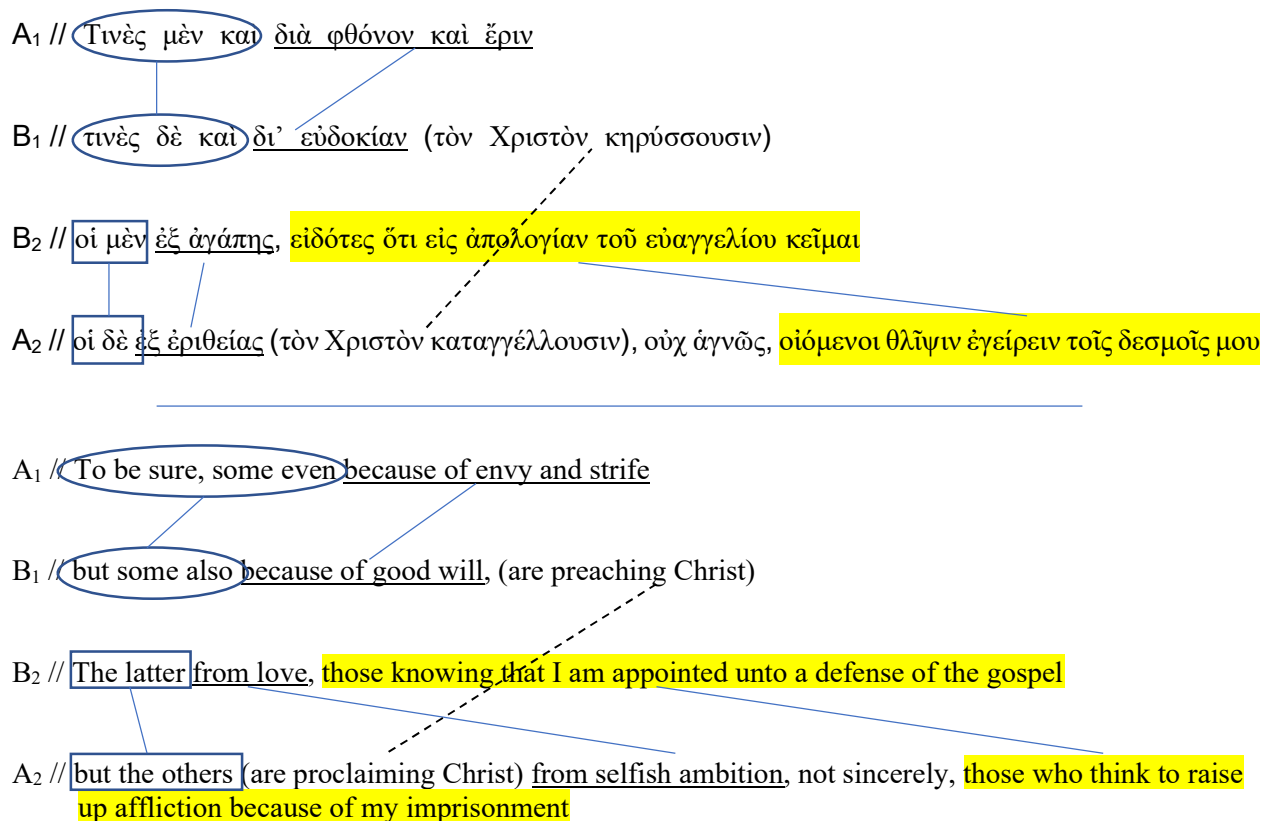
⁴⁶ Robertson, 439. Silva seems to agree, though provides no discussion. Whatever it means, it is synonymous with “love” (v.16; Silva, 64, 66).

⁴⁷ L&N, 23.

⁴⁸ Silva, 66. Kennedy agrees (425).

⁴⁹ L&N, 23-4.

preachers. The well-motivated preachers have not given Paul cause to clarify that he is glad for their preaching. Verses 15-17 (probably 18) are only necessary because of group “A,” so it makes fine sense for the chiasm to place emphasis upon them. In addition to the chiasm, this structure has two primary, intrinsic parallels (A₁ to B₁, B₂ to A₂) which clarify points of contrast. “Envy and strife” contrasts “good will,” “from selfish ambition” contrasts “from love,” and “those who think” contrasts “those knowing.” A good translation will manifest these parallels.



Verse 16 – The latter from love. Literal translation from οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, referring to the second group mentioned in verse 15. This is the love these preachers have for Paul.⁵⁰ – *those knowing that*

⁵⁰ L&N, 24; Robertson, 439; O'Brien, 100. See also MacArthur, 66.

I am appointed unto a defense of the gospel. “Those knowing” (εἰδότες) is a causative participle,⁵¹ explaining what sustains them.⁵² “I am appointed” (κεῖμαι) is typically “I recline” or “I am set.” Figurative use of a military term, which describes the posting of a sentinel. Paul applies it figuratively here (cf. Luke 2:34).⁵³ Thus, “defense of the gospel” (ἀπολογία τοῦ εὐαγγελίου) carries firm and assertive implications.⁵⁴ Verb is passive, implying that God has appointed Paul to this task. These preachers are convinced that Paul is under orders from God to advance the gospel from Roman chains. Paul considered himself cursed if he did not fulfill his divine commission to preach the gospel among the gentiles.⁵⁵ Paul is not in Rome by accident, but by the sovereign purpose of God.

Verse 17 – but the others are proclaiming Christ from selfish ambition. “The others” (οἱ) refers to the former collection of preachers who preach from “selfish ambition” (ἐριθείας). This word originally referred to “working for pay,” later to one who held an office for selfish motives.⁵⁶ This does not mean that the motives are completely immoral, but that they are “mixed and impure.”⁵⁷ Silva argues that no etymological relation actually exists between this word and ἔρις, and therefore the meaning “strife; partisanship” instead of “selfish ambition.” L&N agrees that

⁵¹ L&N, 24.

⁵² O’Brien, 101.

⁵³ L&N, 24. Word also used as “destined” in Luke 2:34, 1 Thessalonians 3:3.

⁵⁴ Not simply “to vindicate” (see L&N, 24).

⁵⁵ Romans 1:14; 1 Corinthians 9:16; 1 Timothy 2:7.

⁵⁶ L&N, 25.

⁵⁷ Robertson, 439.

“partisanship” is a good translation.⁵⁸ Kennedy and O’Brien disagree.⁵⁹ I favor O’Brien, whose opinion seems most widely supported. NASB, ESV, and NIV all translate “selfish ambition.” – *not sincerely*. Two adverbs, “not” descriptive of “sincerely” (ἀγνῶς), the latter descriptive of “proclaiming.” This meaning is, “from mixed motives.”⁶⁰ ἀγνῶς meaning “pure, chaste, holy” from ἅγιος. Used only here in the New Testament.⁶¹ Calvin rightly acknowledges that “the term does not apply to doctrine.”⁶² – *those who think to raise up affliction by my imprisonment*. “Those who think” (οἰόμενοι) is a causal participle referencing intuition and motive,⁶³ parallel to εἰδότες in verse 16.⁶⁴ O’Brien prefers “imagine,”⁶⁵ which properly expresses the reality (present in context) that these preachers have failed to raise affliction for Paul. “Affliction” (θλίψιν) is accusative, the object risen by these preachers. “Because of my imprisonment” (τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου) obtains the English preposition from the dative δεσμοῖς, a dative of grounds, not of means.⁶⁶ The affliction is not raised by using the imprisonment, but on the basis of it. Paul leaves the affliction undefined, yet it must be something supported by His chains. There is little debate that the

⁵⁸ Silva, 66; L&N, 25.

⁵⁹ Kennedy, 425; O’Brien, 100-1.

⁶⁰ “Not” is not descriptive of their proclamation (L&N, 25).

⁶¹ Also in Epistle of Barnabas (2.3, “remain pure”), Pseudepigrapha (Let. Aris. 317, “sacredly guarded”), and Shepherd of Hermas (Herm, v III, v.1).

⁶² Calvin, 37. Further: “Paul assuredly would have felt no pleasure in seeing the gospel corrupted; yet he declares that he rejoices in the preaching of those persons, while it was not simple or sincere.”

⁶³ L&N, 25.

⁶⁴ Kennedy, 425; Silva, 67.

⁶⁵ O’Brien, 101.

⁶⁶ Silva, 66. Robertson seems to disagree (439).

affliction in question is Paul's own, hence NASB, "Thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment." It was the affliction of God for the sake of the gospel that Paul was experiencing (Acts 9:15-16), yet these men doubted and sought an increase. Calvin applies this experience beyond the apostolic age: "Paul, assuredly, says nothing here of which I have not myself had experience."⁶⁷

Excursus: The Identity and Motivation of These Preachers – Robertson believes the preachers are Judaizers, claiming Paul attributes to them the "lowest of motives for preaching Christ."⁶⁸ This is hard to accept when Paul expresses joy in their preaching.⁶⁹ Further, these men are thrice described as proclaimers of Christ. Silva takes a more reasonable position, that these men are Jewish opponents of Paul. Much is favorable here, except that Silva emphatically claims doctrinal distinction between Paul and these opponents.⁷⁰ I favor O'Brien's assertion: these are personal rivalries of Paul, with no considerable doctrinal distinction.⁷¹ However, "personal rivalries" is quite vague.

⁶⁷ Calvin, 37.

⁶⁸ Robertson, 438-39.

⁶⁹ In his letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul considered those who preach the Judaizer message to be anathema (Galatians 1:8-9). O'Brien notes: this passage nowhere questions there the genuineness of the preaching (100).

⁷⁰ Silva, 64-65. I notice no such distinction (see also MacArthur, 64). Romans 16:17-18, 2 Corinthians 11:13, and Galatians 2:4 are irrelevant cross-references in the Pauline corpus. Tertullian adds, "What is skewed among those who 'proclaim Christ out of partisanship' is their temperament and their motive, not the content of their proclamation" (ACC, 214).

⁷¹ O'Brien, 102-5. Kennedy agrees, speculating they might be old teachers in the Roman church who held prominence before Paul arrived (424). MacArthur wisely notes, "It is probable that several factions were involved"

One contrast between these two groups of preachers is how they interpret Paul's imprisonment. The first group considers Paul's imprisonment as a reason to afflict him, perhaps because they do not believe God has truly appointed Paul to advance the Gospel from chains. The second group considers Paul's imprisonment as a reason to support him, because they do believe God has appointed him to defend the Gospel from prison.⁷² The comparison has to do with Paul's validity as an apostle to the Gentiles, whether or not God has truly commissioned him to such an honorable task.

This interpretation makes the best sense of verse 14, where even the ill-motivated preachers are said to have trusted in the Lord more greatly in light of Paul's imprisonment, emboldened to speak the word even more. These are men who do not believe Paul is who he claims to be, and so they are encouraged by his afflictions. Their fundamental mistake, therefore, is a refusal to recognize Paul's apostleship.⁷³ From Paul's perspective, this position comes from "envy" and "selfish ambition," as if they desire for themselves the glory of his apostleship. It comes from "strife; partisanship," as if these men enjoy arguing for its own sake.

Some support for my position is found in 1 Clement where Roman animosity against the apostles is manifest. Could this be the latter portions of an earlier quarrelsomeness, which evidences itself in Philippians 1:15-18? My position is likewise consistent with the prejudicial temptations of Roman citizens. Roman imperial culture, particularly in the capital, often fostered

(65). Calvin agrees, providing two options: opposition on the grounds of Jewish-Gentile prejudice, or opposition on the grounds of simple envy and ambition. Of the latter he writes, "We ought to acknowledge the wonderful goodness of God, who, notwithstanding, gave such a prosperous issue to their depraved affections" (Calvin, 37-38).

⁷² See also O'Brien, 101-2.

⁷³ Perhaps a similar situation to Corinth, another church influenced by Paul (1 Corinthians 3:3-4).

attitudes of cultural and political superiority, and would have considered it absurd that a Jewish carpenter was now their Lord. It is understandable how a converted citizen of Rome could retain prejudice against Jewish authority, especially when that Jewish authority boldly proclaims another lord aside from Caesar.

Verse 18a – For what? Only that by every way. “For what?” (τί γάρ) is a rhetorical question (cf. Romans 3:9; 6:15).⁷⁴ It summarizes Paul’s response to such preachers.⁷⁵ “By” is supplied from “every way” (παντὶ τρόπῳ), a dative of means. The following phrase will elaborate,⁷⁶ but this is not to say τρόπῳ must function identically. Christ is preached by means of these two kinds of preachers, and those means are identified as coming from respective motives. – *whether by pretense, whether by truth.* “Pretense... truth” (προφάσει... ἀληθείᾳ), two datives denoting the means of preaching. προφάσει is a smoke-screen, a cover. Here, preaching Christ is a cover for selfish ends.⁷⁷ This is to preach “truth but not in truth, that is, not in a true spirit.”⁷⁸ To pit these two terms against one another was a common antithesis.⁷⁹ The full potential weight of either word should not be applied to the preachers. Calvin provides a practical interpretation of Paul’s experience: “God sometimes accomplishes an admirable work by means of wicked and depraved instruments.”⁸⁰ – *Christ is being proclaimed, and in this I am rejoicing.* “In this” (ἐν τούτῳ) refers

⁷⁴ L&N, 27.

⁷⁵ O’Brien, 105.

⁷⁶ L&N, 28.

⁷⁷ O’Brien, 106.

⁷⁸ Augustine, *ACC*, 215.

⁷⁹ Kennedy, 426.

⁸⁰ Calvin, 39. He then clarifies just because God draws straight lines with crooked sticks, this does not mean we should call the crooked sticks straight: “We ought, therefore, to rejoice if God accomplishes anything that

to the preaching, not to Paul's imprisonment.⁸¹ L&N prefer to start a new paragraph at the beginning of verse 18, insisting Paul's two uses of "joy" should not be divided.⁸² This seems arbitrary, as it is equally sound to assume ending one paragraph and beginning another with joy provides a better transition. Silva suggests viewing verse 18 as a continuation from verse 12: the gospel advancing from Paul's circumstances.⁸³ I prefer to end the paragraph with verse 18a and begin the next paragraph with verse 18b (see also NASB, ESV, NIV'11). For Paul, the goal of preaching was to advance Christ, not self.⁸⁴ "Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed" (1 Corinthians 15:11). Paul's joy was rooted in something which could not be unearthed – the good news of Christ, not his own circumstances.

is good by means of wicked persons; but they ought not on that account to be either placed by us in the ministry, or looked upon as Christ's lawful ministers." There is a categorical distinction between rejoicing in the fruit of a work, and rejoicing in the work itself.

⁸¹ Kennedy, 426.

⁸² L&N, 26-7.

⁸³ Silva, 69.

⁸⁴ cf. 2 Corinthians 4:5. He fulfilled Christ's command, "Make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves" (Luke 21:14). Perhaps his conviction that these were true believers bolstered his willingness to be unafflicted by their pretentious preaching (cf. Mark 9:38-40). Marius Victorinus writes, "So I too obtain my wish, which is that Christ should be proclaimed. And if that is so, they are wrong to imagine that they have cast me into grief" (ACC, 214).

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