

Studies in Philippians (1:12-26)

Paul's Update for the Philippians

- 12 *I want you to know, brothers and sisters,
that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,*
- 13 *so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard
and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.*
- 14 *And most of the brothers and sisters,
having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment,
are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*
- v12 House arrest in Rome awaiting trial before Nero (Acts 22:26; 25:11; 28:16).
'Advance the gospel' means progress of whole enterprise of Christianity.
- v13 *Praetorium* – the complex occupied by the Praetorian Guard in Rome.¹
Also 4:22: Paul sends greetings from 'those of *Caesar's* household'.
'all the rest' – other people in and around the prison.
Paul's confinement was 'for *Christ*', so it served to 'advance the *gospel*'.
- v14 The power of leadership and example: 'bold to speak the word without fear'.
The expectation was that ordinary members would 'speak the word'.
- 15 *Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will.*
- 16 *The latter do it out of love,
knowing that I am put here for the defence [apologia] of the gospel.*
- 17 *The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition,
not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.*
- 18 *What then?
Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth,
Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.*
- v15 Paul's *real* reason for imprisonment in Rome was for the *apologia* of the gospel.
Those who •'preach Christ from envy and rivalry...out of selfish ambition'?
•think to 'afflict' Paul in his imprisonment?
Jewish Christians who opposed Paul's grace-based, circumcision-free gospel.²
This is key to understanding Paul's epistles.
Nevertheless, Paul rejoices that one way or another 'Christ is proclaimed'.
- 18 *Yes, and I will rejoice,*
- 19 *for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ
this will turn out for my deliverance,*
- 20 *as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed,
but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body,
whether by life or by death.*
- v18 Paul 'rejoices' (key word in Philippians) that 'Christ is proclaimed'.
- v19 His dependence on God through prayer. 'Deliverance' (*sōteria*) here and now.

¹The Praetorian Guard protected Rome and the Caesar. Legions were not to enter Rome.

² They were a counter-mission that attempted to overturn Paul in *Jerusalem* (Gal. 2:3-4), *Syria* (Acts 15:1), *Galatia*, (Gal. 6:12), *Corinth* (2 Cor. 3:6), *Rome* (Rom. 2:28-29), and *Philippi* (Phil. 3:2-3, 18-19).

v20 Effectively, Paul's 'expectation' of release. (Influence of Gallio on Seneca?)
 'Not be ashamed' as if guilty of some crime, other than being a Christian.
 His prayer: for Christ to be honoured, whether by his life or his death.
 Significant that (apparently) Paul expected to be released.³
 Therefore being a Christian was not yet of itself punishable by death.
 But in 64 Nero crucified and immolated a 'vast multitude' of *Christiani*.⁴

- 21 *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*
 22 *If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me.
 Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.*
 23 *I am hard pressed between the two.
 My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.*
 24 *But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.*
 25 *Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all,
 for your progress and joy in the faith,*
 26 *so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus,
 because of my coming (parousia) to you again.*

Paul is 'hard pressed between':

For me	to die is gain	= 'to depart and be with Christ'
For me	to live is Christ	= 'fruitful labour' for me
		= remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith because of my coming to you again

The basis of a Christian's confidence – Philippians 3:7-9:

*For Christ's sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish,
 in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him,
 not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law,
 but that which comes through faith in Christ,
 the righteousness from God that depends on faith.*

Reflection: the example of Paul

1. Paul's *faith*: he is candid about his problems but confident of God's goodness and power.
2. Paul's *leadership*: He tells his story about himself in Rome to encourage the Philippian Christians to face their problems in Philippi.
3. Paul's *hope*:
 To *die* is gain means to depart and be with Christ (confidence based on grace).
 To *live* means fruitful labour for the joy and faith of others.
4. Paul's *passion*: Upholding the honour of Christ was uppermost for Paul.
 He rejoices that his imprisonment is *for Christ*
 and that he will not be ashamed of conviction for a crime.
5. Paul's *perseverance*:
 Suffering was inflicted on Paul (indirectly) by those who 'preached Christ'.
 Jealousy, envy and malicious talk are not unknown among Christians.
 But Paul was not deflected but kept pressing on in the service of the Lord.

³Seneca (Nero's advisor and speech writer) was brother of Gallio proconsul of Achaia who acquitted Paul in Corinth (Acts 18).

⁴Tacitus, *Annals* xv.44.

6. But, undeterred, we are to keep pressing on with the gospel of grace, not discouraged or deflected by the wrongdoing of fellow (professed) Christians.