

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

“More About Bondage”

Philippians 1:14-19

Background

1. A loving salutation opens this inspired letter (vv. 1, 2). Prayer follows (vv. 3, 4) and grateful thanks (v. 5). Then comes confidence in God’s work at Philippi (v. 6) and the church’s mutuality with the apostle Paul (v. 7).

2. God is Paul’s witness (v. 8) about his prayer for them (vv. 9-11). Meanwhile, his prison experiences have worked to further the Gospel in high circles (vv. 12, 13).

3. There are effects of Paul’s prison bonds in another direction (vv. 14-19). Provocative statements are made about the “brethren.” Consider these:

1. Their IDENTIFICATION v. 14

a. Designation

The word “brethren” suggests a certain “profession” as opposed to “generation.” This is a wide use of a spiritual situation. The term is obviously used with grace and longsuffering.

b. Conviction

The prepositional phrase “in the Lord” is better attached to the verb “confident” (). This perfect tense provides the direction of their confidence, namely, Paul’s bonds. These men had a new assurance of their cause and hope -- all based on Paul’s chains.

c. Expression

In view of the matter, these brethren more lavishly spoke the Word. “Of God” is to be omitted. Without Paul’s bonds, many did not speak out. Now they speak and without fear. Paul’s calamity worked wonders!

2. Their CLASSIFICATION vv. 15-17

It is clear there are two sets of brethren: “some” (; v. 15) and “the one . . . the other” (; v. 16, 17). It is not for us to dilute Scripture. They speak for themselves. Check out the classifications clearly delineated.

a. Class #1

These are described by the following:

1) Having Envy

The preposition with the accusative noun means “on account of” () Envy indicates to be discontent at the excellence or good fortune of another. It is resentful begrudging.

2) Having Strife

Using “even . . . and” () add insult to the two phrases. While the preposition is not repeated (), the one governs the second noun (). This term means wrangling and contention. Rivalry is more prominent than schism.

3) Having Contention

This root is related to the previous one (). It suggests something prompted by faction and partisanship. Selfish ambition is latent to the word.

4) Having Insincerity

The noun employed here with the negative means without pure motives (). It is an expression about impure intentions.

5) Having Affliction

While there is some textual change, the facts are the same. This class seeks to cause afflictions to rise (be added) to Paul’s bonds (). Thus their thinking is to cause Paul’s misery in prison to be increased by tribulation.

NOTE: These five characteristics of class #1 are linked with the verb to “preach” () and to “proclaim” (). Both verbs are much the same, though the latter presents the idea of promulgation or making fully known the Gospel. It is clear something is radically wrong.

b. Class #2

1) Having good will

This term () is linked with also () and the preposition “of” meaning “on account of” (with accusative case). What a refreshing difference to the previous diatribe.

2) Having choice love

Selective “love” () is the resource indicated by “of” (). Hence, love to the Lord and His servant Paul make a huge difference.

3) Having special knowledge

The knowledge is innate () and relates to Paul’s divine appointment as defender of the Gospel. Paul is not an incapacitated preacher begging for help. He is rather God’s posted sentry. Quickened and energized as an example to provoke others to join him.

NOTE: The three characteristics listed are all positive and commendable. So be it.

3. Their EXPLANATION vv.18, 19

Two groups exist according to the text. What is the upshot of this situation? The Spirit has the information:

a. A Question raised

“What then?” is like saying “things as they are, what is the state of my feelings?” Briefly: “well, what do you think of that?” The phrase () forms a brisk transitional thought.

b. A Modification offered

“Notwithstanding” () means “only that” suggesting their is a modification offered. On the one hand there is “pretense” or pretext, that is something alleged to cloak the real intention. On the other hand there is the “truth,” that is the real Gospel. Paul affirms that the Gospel of Christ is being diffused, but he does not support a counterfeit Gospel. The issue is not alone motive, but message (cf. Gal. 1:6-9).

c. An Expectation anticipated

The promulgation of Christ was the apostle’s rejoicing (present) () and anticipated rejoicing (future). He believes his own spiritual good will be furthered (v. 19).

Conclusion The bonds of Paul had a fall out. He lists Nero’s palace first. Then what he noticed out in the church. In the midst of confused “brethren,” he stood firm for the truth. This was his constant concern. Let not this text be employed to affirm a compromising Gospel. God forbid.