

“Delight in the Midst of Disaster” (Philippians 1:12–18a)

[Play Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus”]. What you just listened to was Handel’s great “Hallelujah Chorus.” When Handel wrote the “Hallelujah Chorus,” his health and his fortunes had reached an all-time low. His right side had become paralyzed, and all his money was gone. He was heavily in debt and threatened with imprisonment. He was tempted to give up the fight. The odds seemed entirely too great. And it was *then* he composed his greatest work—*Messiah*.¹

Today you may be going through one of the lowest seasons in your life. Perhaps you’ve recently been diagnosed with cancer and you’re wondering what the future holds for you and your loved ones. Maybe you just lost your job and you don’t see how God can provide for you and your family during this time of economic uncertainty. Perhaps your parents are getting a divorce and you’re scared and angry. Maybe a family member or friend just passed away and you don’t know how you can carry on. Whatever you’re going through today, I want you to know there is hope. God wants to work in and through you in the midst of your pain. But as you know, the Christian life can be bittersweet. It’s bitter when you experience suffering and loss. Let’s face it, trials and tragedies are awful! No one loves suffering and hardship.² Nevertheless, the Christian life is also sweet in the sense that our suffering is never wasted on God. He works His purposes even in the midst of your pain. In fact, God will do some of His best work in and through you when you are in the midst of personal crisis.

Paul shares from personal experience that your perspective in times of pain makes all the difference.³ You’ll see that the question Paul asks himself is not, “Is what’s happening to me fair?” Rather, he poses this question: “Is what’s happening to me accomplishing something for God? Is it furthering His purposes in the world?”⁴ If you reflect on this question, you will discover that *you can have your best witness in your worst circumstances*.⁵ In Philippians 1:12–18a,⁶ Paul shares two encouraging realities about adversity. These realities will give you even greater confidence in the power of the gospel.

1. Adversity advances God’s kingdom (1:12–14). Paul is going to challenge you to view your adversity in light of its kingdom contribution. In doing so, he insists that adversity does not stymie the gospel; rather, it advances the gospel. Paul puts it like this: “**Now I want you to know, brethren,⁷ that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ⁸ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else**” (1:12–13). Paul opens with the important phrase: “Now I want you to know.” This phrase introduces something important.⁹ Here, it functions as a topic sentence for all that follows through 1:26.¹⁰ (Paul begins the body of his letter in 1:12 and it runs through 4:9.)¹¹ In 1:12, Paul explains that his “circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.” What are Paul’s specific circumstances?¹² He is serving a prison sentence in Rome and is most likely in the custody of the “praetorian¹³ guard.” These are elite troops housed in the emperor’s palace.¹⁴ They are a specialized, handpicked, military group. They were Caesar’s own personal bodyguards—strong, courageous, brilliant, sophisticated, young men—kind of a mixture of West Point and the Secret Service. They served in the palace guard for twelve years, protecting Caesar and guarding the prisoners, who, like Paul, had appealed to him. After twelve years they transitioned into other influential careers. Some went on to be the commanding generals of large forces. Others went into public office and became senators or ambassadors to other countries. Still others advanced into the top echelons of business and industry. As a group, they were the movers and shakers of the future, the opinion leaders, and kingmakers of the next generation. They were a powerful and strategic group of young men. If you wanted to influence the Roman Empire,¹⁵ you couldn’t pick a better group to start with. Every day Paul grinned to himself because, for two years, one of them wore the other end of his chain, and for six hours, had to stay within four feet of him. He wasn’t chained to *them*; they were chained to *him*!¹⁶ Literally, Paul had a captive audience with whom he shared Christ, which led to a chain reaction of conversions throughout the whole Roman palace.¹⁷

Paul's imprisonment led to "the greater progress of the gospel" (1:12). The noun "progress" (*prokope*)¹⁸ means "cut before" and speaks of the cutting of a path by pioneers to open the way for an army to advance into new territory.¹⁹ Even though Paul's imprisonment may have seemed like a setback, it actually served to advance the gospel among those in Rome.²⁰ In God's sovereignty, the Lord ordained Paul's imprisonment in Rome so many people would hear the gospel who would not otherwise have heard it. Furthermore, many of these people are significant and influential people, who in the future, have a great impact for God. Although God closes a prison door behind Paul, He opens a new door for the gospel. Always remember, Jesus is Lord even in prison! He has His people behind bars so they can spread the gospel! This is why Paul cares more about the progress of the gospel than his own problems. He is confident that God is always at work. And he believes that *you can have your best witness in your worst circumstances*.

Similarly, God uses your painful circumstances to advance His gospel. You may not like your job, your school, your neighborhood, or your marriage, but God has you "chained up" to some people who need Christ. Have you ever stopped to ponder the fact that God placed you in your school so that you might share Christ? Have you realized that God gave you a particular job in order for you to share Christ with your boss and coworkers? Are you cognizant of the fact that God directed you to buy a house in a particular neighborhood with neighbors who need to hear about His Son? There are no mistakes or coincidences. God has a plan and He is advancing His kingdom through YOU.

Adversity will come to you sooner or later. Unfortunately, you're not given a choice about most of the things that happen to you. I hate to break this to you, but you're in one of three situations: Either you're in a trial right now, or you're just coming out of a trial, or you're about to enter a trial and just don't know it yet. Such is life this side of heaven. But opportunity knocks whenever you experience a tragedy or trial. Thus, you must train yourself to see every tragedy as a divine opportunity to advance the gospel. You may one day lose a child, yet God can use that tragedy to open doors for the good news of Christ. Your spouse may leave you one day for someone else, and God may use your loss for His gain. On a smaller scale, you may get cut from a team or fail to get into the college you wanted to attend. Yet, God may open new doors to reach more students with His gospel. The question is not, "Is what's happening to me fair?" but instead, "Is what's happening to me accomplishing something for God? Is what's happening to me being useful to God in some way? Is it furthering His purposes in the world?"²¹

Paul concludes this section in 1:14 by explaining another way that God is using his imprisonment: "**and that most of the brethren, trusting [having gained confidence²²] in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.**" Paul's prison sentence brought about greater boldness among the Roman Christians.²³ Rather than laying low and hiding out, these believers felt inspired by Paul's courage. Consequently, they are standing up boldly for Christ and proclaiming Him in unprecedented fashion. Apparently, they figure, "If Paul can share Christ in prison, why can't I do it as a free person?" Likewise, when I hear about my brothers and sisters in places like Sudan, North Korea, China, and India courageously sharing their faith amidst severe persecution, I get motivated to boldly share Christ.

Do you realize that your commitment to boldly share Christ in the difficult circumstances of your life will embolden others to do the same? As a public school teacher, if you find ways to creatively share Christ, when other Christian teachers find out about what you are doing, they are going to want to do the same. As a state employee, if you host a Bible study and other Christian state employees find out about this, they may attempt to do the very same thing. As a public high school student, if you host a prayer gathering and Christian students from other school districts hear about it, they may follow suit in their school. You can have a powerful witness because God emboldens us to proclaim Christ by observing the witness of other believers. It will not be easy, but *you can have your best witness in your worst circumstances*.

[Adversity advances God's kingdom because the world is all eyes and ears when Christians suffer. They want to know how you will respond. When you trust Christ in the midst of your adversity the gospel advances in and through you. A second reality of adversity is...]

2. Adversity reveals our priorities (1:15–18a).²⁴ In the midst of trials and suffering, you find out what is *really* important to you. Adversity serves as a true gut check. In these verses you will see how Paul's true passion and priorities reveal themselves. In 1:15–17 he writes: **“Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter *do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.*”**²⁵ If you read through these verses carefully, you ought to be exclaiming, “Can you believe this? What in the world is going on here? It's not bad enough that Paul is in prison, now he has some preachers²⁶ who are hoping to rub salt in his wounds! Who are these devils? First of all, we must recognize that these are not false teachers;²⁷ they are selfish teachers.²⁸ Paul is clear in 1:15 and 17: these preachers “preach Christ,” but they do so from “envy and strife” and out of “selfish ambition.” The word translated “selfish ambition” (*eritheia*) was used to describe a selfish worker interested only in his own pay or a politician in the self-seeking pursuit of office regardless of means. In the same vein, with Paul in prison, there is now a perceived vacancy, and these preachers are all seeking to be the top dog.²⁹ They are petty, territorial, calculating, and focused on self-promotion. They aren't anti-Christ, they are anti-Paul.³⁰

What bothered these preachers was that Paul was getting too much attention. As far as they were concerned, he was just a little bit too famous—the big shot apostle who came to town as an imperial prisoner, guarded by Caesar's personal bodyguards. All the Christians in Rome were talking about him and singing his praises. As a result, some of the local pastors got a bit envious of all the attention Paul was getting. Who was he to come into their city and get all the praise after they'd been there for years? So, some of them took advantage of the situation so that they, too, would become more prominent. It was kind of a rivalry with them.³¹ Perhaps they said things like this: “You know how much we love and respect our dear brother Paul. No one loves him more than we do. However, it seems as if Paul causes trouble wherever he goes. Someone stones him, or they arrest him, or he has to sneak out of town in the middle of the night. We don't like to mention it, but there are bad rumors about him back in Jerusalem. I personally don't believe them, but we can't reject them out of hand. It's possible he's guilty of the charges against him. He's a wonderful preacher, but he seems to stir up trouble in every city. Frankly, I think it's extremely embarrassing to have an esteemed apostle in jail...and in Rome of all places. Perhaps it would be better if Paul had never come to our city. In any case, he can hardly be our spiritual leader while he's in jail. Let's agree to pray for him and ask God to release him and send him somewhere else—preferably a long way from here.”³²

Fortunately, Paul could always fall back on those preachers who proclaimed the gospel from goodwill and out of love for him (1:16). These pastors recognized that God had placed Paul exactly where He wanted him. The word translated “appointed” (*keimai*) was a military term indicating a military assignment or orders. In other words, the good pastors knew that God had assigned Paul to his chains and to a courtroom appearance before Caesar; God had ordered him there to defend the gospel at the highest level in the Roman Empire. They wanted to do their part where they could.

So how does Paul respond to these two types of preachers? In 1:18a, he closes with some astonishing words: **“What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.”**³³ The phrase “What then?” means, “What do I say about that?” or even, “So what?”³⁴ This question refers back to 1:15–17.³⁵ Paul is essentially saying, “All that I know is the gospel is being proclaimed...it is advancing! And that thrills my heart! I rejoice!” His sentiments are that it is better for people with impure motives to preach Christ than they not preach Him at all. After all, “He who is not against you is for you” (Luke 9:50). Suppressing Paul is like trying to sink a cork in a bath!³⁶

Paul can exude this attitude because he is consumed with the gospel. Ultimately, he is not concerned with his own reputation, ministry, or happiness. Rather, Paul wants the success of the gospel—he longs for it to advance. What an example! All kinds of issues cry for our attention: abortion, pornography, media bias, economic injustice, racial discrimination, classism, sexism, to name a few. These are important issues, but the great danger is that we become so passionate or concerned about these issues that the gospel is marginalized.³⁷ This has been happening in the Protestant church for years! But when the gospel is preached by gospel-focused people, God transforms the culture. The key is “to keep the main thing the main thing.” Life does not revolve around being happily married, raising the perfect family, making a lot of money, or being successful in your job. Life revolves around preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. For Paul, the “main thing” is the gospel. And in the gospel, Paul will rejoice!

Undoubtedly, though, the slander of these preachers hurt Paul deeply. It must have broken his heart to know that some of his brothers were using his prison time against him. Nevertheless, Paul has a big heart and broad shoulders, and he knows people often do the right things for the wrong reasons. This is why in 1 Cor 4:1–5, Paul himself says, “I don’t judge others or myself; I leave that to the Lord Jesus Christ (paraphrase).

It is critical to follow Paul’s example and not get caught up criticizing the methods and motives of other ministries. This is counterproductive for several reasons: (1) Criticism is addictive, because it can turn you away from your own faults and breeds a spirit of self-righteousness and intolerance. I don’t know about you, but I have enough sins and weaknesses to worry about in my own life and ministry. (2) Criticism diverts an extraordinary amount of time and energy away from the positive proclamation of Christ. There are too many Christian witch hunters who are known for who and what they are against. We ought to be for Christ and His gospel, (3) Criticism stirs up divisiveness and disunity before the world. This leads unbelievers to say, “I’d rather be at the bar or the country club where people love me. The church shoots its own wounded and is full of backbiting.” We must be sensitive to this objection and change the world’s perspective. Let us begin by contending for the faith and not with the faithful.³⁸

As you contend for the faith and proclaim Christ, you can experience joy. It’s been said, “If we see Jesus in our circumstances, then we will see our circumstances in Jesus.” Paul lived this! Remember, Paul is writing this letter from a Roman prison. Furthermore, five of Paul’s thirteen letters were written from prison.³⁹ Paul would not let himself give way to self-pity. He knows that in order to exude joy in the midst of adversity he must see adversity from an eternal perspective. The key to his joy was between his ears. Over thirty times in Philippians Paul refers to the mind or to remembering. When joy has leaked out of your life, the leak is between your ears. You must change your thinking so that you can experience joy once again. May you do so today. *You can have your best witness in the worst of times.*

My seminary classmate and dear friend, Mike Paolicelli, was diagnosed with cancer this past January. For the last six months Mike and his wife Janet, along with their two young boys, Titus and Simeon, have been through the most difficult season of their entire lives. Mike has been on the verge of passing away due to various complications throughout this ordeal. He and his family have experienced every human emotion imaginable. Yet, throughout this traumatic ordeal, the Paolicelli’s have not wavered in their faith. They have resolutely believed that God has a purpose in their personal suffering. They have been a model to countless people throughout the world.

This past Tuesday, Mike was in for his tenth chemo treatment. Janet and the boys decided to visit Mike at the start of his treatment. This was a rare occurrence because children are not officially allowed in the cancer infusion area. While Mike was waiting his turn, his boys became a bit rambunctious. (Can you blame them?) Simeon was particularly talkative and loud, causing distraction for the other chemo patients.

Mike's attending nurse, who had never treated him before, came up to them and said, "Would you like a private room where you and your family can sit?" This had never happened before, so the Paolicelli's took advantage of this opportunity to have some secluded family time. Eventually, it was time for Janet and the boys to leave and for Mike to begin his first chemical injection.

Just before giving the injection, this nurse said, "So, I hear you're a pastor?" Mike responded affirmatively.

The nurse replied, "I'm Catholic. But I have so many questions, and I want more."

Mike asked, "Do you mind if I ask you a question?"

"Sure," the nurse said.

"On a scale of 1–10, where 10 is, 'I am absolutely sure,' and 1 is, 'I am absolutely unsure,' would you say that your sins are forgiven and that if you were to stand before God today, He would let you into heaven?"

"I'm a 5," replied the nurse.

Mike asked, "Would you like to know for certain your sins are completely forgiven?"

"Yes, I would," she responded.

Mike then shared the gospel with this nurse and invited her to trust in Christ. The nurse came and sat down with Mike and she prayed to believe in Christ as her Savior!

God used Mike's cancer and his loud boys to orchestrate a set of circumstances to bring a young nurse in Charlotte, NC to faith in Christ. Mike put it like this: "Does it get any better than this? Don't think for a minute that God can't or doesn't use your difficulties for a purpose larger than yourself. He does."⁴⁰ God can use your adversity in the same way. Whatever you're going through today, pray: "Lord, help me to submit to You and trust You in the midst of my pain. May I only care about how my trial advances your gospel."

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Scripture References

Philippians 1:12–18

Jeremiah 17:9–10

Job 13:12–19

Acts 4:1–22

Acts 28:30–31

2 Timothy 2:8–10

John 15:18–25; 16:1–4, 33

Study Questions

1. What has been the worst thing that has ever happened to me? How did I feel when this ordeal began? Over time how did my perspective and attitude change? What did God teach me through this traumatic period in my life? How has this low point in my life prepared me to undergo future trials? Read James 1:2–12.
2. In the midst of my adversity, how has God opened doors for me to share Christ? How have people responded when they have observed my joy and confidence in the Lord during these awful circumstances? What questions did people ask me? What comments did they make? How did I respond to their questions and comments? What would I say differently today as a result of studying Philippians 1:12–18?
3. Who has observed my personal suffering? How has my adversity encouraged these individuals to boldly live for Christ and proclaim Him? What testimonies have I heard from others as a result of my life and witness? How can I consciously take my eyes off of myself and verbally encourage those who are in my sphere of influence?
4. What is my attitude toward those Christians who seem to want the worst for me? Read Romans 12:18. How can I flesh this principle out in my own life? How can I adopt Paul's optimistically eternal perspective? How does Philippians 1:15–17 help me understand God's sovereignty? How can I use these verses to encourage other brothers and sisters in Christ?
5. Can I honestly say that my passion in life is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ? If not, what keeps me from being consumed with this good news? How can I fan the flame of my zeal for Jesus Christ? Who is the boldest witness I know? Will I strive to spend some time with this person? Will I take steps this week to share Jesus Christ with my neighbors, coworkers, and classmates?

Notes

¹ Preaching Today citation: Peter Marshall, Sr., “Who Can Take It?” Preaching Today, Tape No. 131.

² See the excellent comments on suffering from Frank Thielman, *Philippians*. NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 63–73. See also D.A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

³ Phil 1:12–18 present Paul as a positive model for all believers. Rather than valuing his own comfort, reputation, and freedom above all else, he put the advancement of God’s plan first. He discerned what was best (1:10). He could maintain a truly joyful attitude even in unpleasant circumstances because he derived his joy from seeing God glorified rather than from seeing himself exalted. His behavior in prison had been pure and blameless (cf. 1:10).

⁴ “Don Sunukjian, “It’s All About You, Lord” (Phil 1:12–18): www.preachingtoday.com.

⁵ This appears to be the NT counterpart to Joseph’s words: “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” (Gen 50:20).

⁶ The NIV appropriately divides this section (Phil 1:12–18a), into two paragraphs: 1:12–14 and 1:15–18a.

⁷ Paul uses *adelphoi* (“brothers and sisters”) nine times in Philippians (1:12, 14; 2:25; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 8, 21).

⁸ Thielman, *Philippians*, 59 notes, “[The phrase ‘in Christ’] probably not only carries the connotation of being in prison for Christ’s sake but also of participating in Christ’s suffering by being in prison. The purpose of Christ’s suffering was the advancement of God’s redemptive work, and so it was an evil through which God effected great good for humanity (Rom. 3:21–26; 5:12–21; 2 Cor. 5:21). Paul believes that his own suffering, since its origin lies in his efforts to fulfill the ‘ministry of reconciliation’ to which God has called him (2 Cor. 5:18), has the same quality (Phil. 3:10; cf. 2 Cor. 1:5; 4:7–15; Col. 1:24–29). Thus his imprisonment is not simply a result of his Christian commitment but is the necessary means through which Paul fulfills his calling. It is not only ‘for Christ’ but ‘in Christ’ as well.” See also Peter T. O’Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*. New International Greek Testament Commentary series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 92; Moisés Silva, *Philippians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd ed. Edited by Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992, 2005), 68.

⁹ Cf. 2 Cor 13:6; 2 Tim 3:1. See also Thielman, *Philippians*, 57; Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Philippians,” 2009 ed.: www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/philippians.pdf, 13.

¹⁰ Paul does not use the precise phrase “I want you to know” (*ginoskein de humas boulomai*) elsewhere in his writings (Cf. Col 2:1; see also Rom 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 11:3; 12:1; 2 Cor 1:8; 1 Thess 4:13 for similar constructions). However, this phrase was common in Paul’s culture and there are several papyri which have the same formula (i.e., “I want you to know,” and then follow it with facts about how the writer is doing, his safety, feelings, and activities). See Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Ralph P. Martin, vol. 43 (Waco: Word, 1983), 33.

¹¹ See Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 109–10. It is debated whether the body of the letter begins with 1:12 or 1:27. See Duane F. Watson, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question,” *Novum Testamentum* 30 (1988): 61. It is common to take the disclosure formula in 1:12 as the transition into the body of the letter. Compare L. Gregory Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 147; Ben Witherington III, *Friendship and Finances In Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 7, 43.

¹² Some of the “circumstances” that Paul endured are as follows: He was arrested on the basis of a false accusation (Acts 21:30); he was nearly lynched in the ensuing riot (Acts 21:35–36); he was nearly flogged and had to plead his Roman citizenship to avoid it (Acts 22:25); he was made the object of insults (Acts 23:2); he was maliciously misrepresented (Acts 24:5, 25:6–7); his life was plotted against (Acts 23:12); he was kept in prison because of unscrupulous officials (Acts 24:27); he nearly died in a sea crossing to Rome (Acts 27); and he was imprisoned for two years without ever facing his accusers (Acts 28).

¹³ The KJV and NKJV have “palace” (see Acts 23:35). Originally the term referred to a Roman general’s tent (*praetor*), but after the age of Roman conquest it came to be used in an administrative sense to denote the headquarters or residence of the political/military administration (cf. Matt 27:27; John 18:28,33; 19:9; Acts 23:35). However, in the first century Roman world it was used for the officers who made up the special Imperial Guard.

¹⁴ Constable, “Notes on Philippians,” 14 writes, “The praetorian guard probably refers to the soldiers who were members of the regiment assigned to guard many of the high ranking officials in the Roman government. These soldiers were also responsible to guard prisoners who had appealed to Caesar such as Paul. It was an honor to be one of these guards. They would have been with Paul in his hired house where he was under house arrest 24 hours a day (cf. Acts 28:30-31). Paul had the opportunity to witness to many of these high ranking soldiers, and he viewed this

as a great blessing.”

¹⁵ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 113–14 also holds to a Roman imprisonment, although Thielman, *Philippians*, and others shed some doubt on this.

¹⁶ Sunukjian, “It’s All About You, Lord.”

¹⁷ Within two or three years, the number of Christians in Rome would be described by the Roman historian Tacitus as a “vast multitude.” Boa, *Reflections*, May 1987.

¹⁸ Paul uses *prokope* (“progress, advancement”) to refer to his own progress and advancement in Judaism as a young man (Gal 1:14). He also uses the term in reference to the progress he wants Timothy to evidence as he gives himself fully to his pastoral concerns (1 Tim 4:15). Paul also uses *prokope* in a negative sense to refer to the progress in evil that false teachers are engaged in (2 Tim 3:9, 13).

¹⁹ This military metaphor would have appealed to the Roman veterans in Philippi (remember that Philippi was a Roman colony and a military outpost; Acts 16:12). See Kenneth Boa, *Reflections Newsletter* April 1987.

²⁰ Paul mentions the gospel twice in this text (1:12, 16) and he also uses three synonyms: “to speak the Word,” “preach Christ,” and “proclaim Christ.” Hughes writes, “For Paul, the advance of the gospel overrides all else. Everything in Paul’s life is subsumed to this end. If we fail to understand this, we fail to understand Paul.” R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*. Preaching the Word (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 48.

²¹ Sunukjian, “It’s All About You, Lord.”

²² The HCSB captures a better rendering of the Greek participle *pepoithotas*. Cf. NET, ESV, NRSV, NKJV, NLT. However, the NASB depends upon BDAG s.v. *peithio* 4 who defines the use of Phil 1:14 as “depend on, trust in”

²³ This is a specific reference (Phil 1:13 “in Rome”), not a general reference to include the Christians in Thessalonica, Corinth, and Philippi. The believers in Philippi have notably been faithfully supporting Paul all along (1:5–8).

²⁴ Verses 15–18a form a unit with an *inclusio* (“bookends”), that is, it begins and ends on the same note: In 1:15 Paul says that “some preach Christ” and in 1:18a he speaks about the fact that “Christ is preached.”

²⁵ For an excellent commentary on these verses see Greg Herrick, “Lesson 4: Paul’s Circumstances: Perspective, Joy, and Mission in Life—Part I (1:12–18a)” in *Philippians: The Unconquerable Gospel* at www.bible.org.

²⁶ O’Brien, *Philippians*, 105 rightly notes a positive identification of Paul’s enemies is impossible.

²⁷ If these were false teachers, Paul would have verbally chastised them like in Gal 1:6–9.

²⁸ D.A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 25.

²⁹ Envy and rivalry regularly come up on Paul’s vice lists (Rom 1:29; Gal 5:20).

³⁰ Hughes, *Philippians*, 50.

³¹ Sunukjian, “It’s All About You, Lord.”

³² Ray Pritchard, “Keep Your Eye on the Donut and Not on the Hole” (Phil 1:12–18):

www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1998-09-20-Keep-Your-Eye-on-the-Donut-and-Not-on-the-Hole.

³³ I love Swindoll’s paraphrase of these verses: “So what if some preach with wrong motives? Furthermore, some may be overly impressed with themselves...and take unfair shots at me. Who cares? What really matters is this; *Christ is being proclaimed*... and that thought alone intensifies my joy! All the other stuff, I leave to God to handle” (original emphasis). Charles R. Swindoll, *Laugh Again* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 54–55.

³⁴ Jerry L. Sumney, *Philippians: A Greek Student’s Intermediate Reader* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 24.

³⁵ The Greek conjunction *gar* (“for, then”) makes this clear.

³⁶ Gordon, *An Odyssey of Joy*, 45.

³⁷ Hughes, *Philippians*, 52.

³⁸ Kenneth Boa, *Reflections*, July 1987.

³⁹ It is an astonishing thought to think of how much of Paul’s writing ministry took place in jail. He wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and 2 Timothy while incarcerated.

⁴⁰ My friend, Mike Paolicelli, pastors Renew Church in Charlotte, NC. I am privileged to be the chairman of his ministry organization called “God Factor.” I urge you to check out Mike’s website: www.godfactor.com/.