

## Philippians 1:12-18 (New Living Translation, NLT)

**12** *And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. 13 For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. 14 And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear.*

**15** *It's true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. 16 They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. 17 Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. 18 But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice.*

Paul, while imprisoned in Rome, is now writing to reassure the Philippians that he is alive and well. The church was worried about Paul and the preaching of the gospel and would have been anxious to hear from him. In this passage Paul assures them ***“that everything that has happened has helped to spread the gospel,”*** (v12). What those who are opposed to the gospel meant for evil has turned out for good. Paul doesn't speak about the conditions of imprisonment, nor of his suffering, or afflictions; for him all that matters is the spread of the gospel.

How did this advance the gospel? Verse 13 is Paul's answer to the question. It is advanced because ***“the whole palace guard knows why he is in chains.”*** Remember, Paul is chained between two palace guards, who are on rotation, and so the reason for his chains has spread throughout the guards. Can you imagine being chained to Paul? The opportunity to see and hear Paul surely would have convinced many to turn to Christ. The guards would know that he was in chains not for a crime, but because of Christ. They would hear the gospel message, see his conduct as a Christian prisoner, his witness for Christ and his character in adverse conditions. In Acts 28 it tells of others who came and conversed with Paul and by these means the gospel advanced.

Another reason for the advance of the gospel is found in verse 14, ***“And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear.”*** The church in Rome existed before Paul arrived. His imprisonment at first created fear and anxiety among the church leaders concerning the public preaching of the gospel in Rome. Now they are filled with courage and have begun preaching openly in the city. The words ***“most of the believers”*** indicates that there were some who remained timid and anxious, but others took new confidence as they see Paul in chains continuing the work.

In verses 15-17 Paul focuses on the preaching of the gospel, the good news of Christ, and specifically upon the motivation and character of the those who preach Christ. He identifies two categories of those who preach; those who do so ***“out of jealousy and rivalry”*** and those do so ***“with pure motives,”*** (v15). Paul describes those who

preach with pure motives in verse 16, **“they preach because they love me.”** They recognised the call upon Paul **“to defend the Good News.”** But those who preach from **“jealousy and rivalry”** do so **“with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me,” (v17).** It is interesting that Paul three times declares that they preach Christ (vv15, 17, 18). The content of their preaching is sound, it contains no heresy or perversion of the gospel. The real issue is motives and attitudes that do not reflect true Christian character.

Paul’s response, **“But that doesn’t matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice,” (v18).** Paul isn’t saying that it is ok to preach out of false motives, rather he is saying he will not take offence because the greater good is that Christ is preached. He rejoices in that this goal of proclaiming Christ is being achieved.

What should we take away from this passage? I’m going to suggest some things to think about and let you discover what you think is most important. You might start by considering the following:

1. Paul’s attitude toward suffering
2. Paul’s response to those who preach from jealousy and rivalry
3. How to respond to fear in the face of opposition
4. What is the ultimate goal for Paul? What is yours?

In conclusion, I was reminded of Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” God can use imprisonment, jealousy and rivalry, hardship, and suffering to accomplish His purposes.

Blessings,

Don  
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