



Following the upward call through Philippians ...

Proclaiming Christ

"A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water," said the wise Solomon, "but a man of understanding draws it out" (Proverbs 20:5). Men have their motives, some good and some not so good. But skilled purveyors of the word, like the apostle Paul, have the understanding necessary to see what is truly going on, to be able to draw out of the hearts of men what their plans are. The apostle was excited in knowing that his imprisonment had actually furthered the cause of the gospel. Some of the brethren, he noted, were able to increase their trust in the Lord and to speak the word of God

with "far more courage" than they had prior to his imprisonment. Some of the brethren's motives were good, and some were ... not so good.

- **Mixture of motives** — When a new movement gets started, as Christianity was during the time of Paul's proclamation, there are a percentage of people who view it is a type of business opportunity; their goal is to get in on the "ground floor" so that they can reap later profits or garner later accolades. There are those who want high visibility, so that they can be the "biggest fish in the pond." There are some that are competitive, who want to be first at any cost and are willing to use "trash talk" to intimidate or denigrate their perceived competition. Paul thusly writes, speaking of the preaching of the gospel: "Some, to be sure," he asseverates, "are preaching Christ even from envy and strife" (Philippians 1:15). These, says he, "proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment" (Philippians 1:17). This gives a picture of what the situation *inside* the church is, and how intense is the battle for souls against the forces of evil and darkness. Others, praise God, preach Christ "from good will." These "latter" ones "do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel" (Philippians 1:15,16). Here is the great apostle Paul, who laid down his life to establish these congregations among the Gentiles, hated among the Jews and increasingly persecuted by Roman authorities. What kind of help does he get from many inside the church of the Lord, then? Because he is so successful, the envious and ambitious just can't resist taking their shots at him while he is essentially defenseless in the prison. Some are taking advantage of the fact that Paul could not be physically present and are creating all kinds of unnecessary strife. But some of the others understood Paul's purpose in serving the Lord!

**Most brethren
were desirous of
seeing the cause of
Christ go forward.**

- **Defense of the gospel** — As the apostle made clear, he was "appointed for the defense of the gospel." The word *defense* is a broad word including a lot more than just simple "defending" the truths of the word of God. The system of thought called *apologetics* is derived from this word, and it has to do with laying down the whole foundation to prove that the Bible is the word of God. It deals currently with the issues of evolution vs. creation, as well whether there are absolutes or "there are no absolutes." The *defense* of the gospel would include the issues of what it means for Jesus to be "the Christ, the Son of God," as well as immersion into Christ being a requirement for salvation. It would cover the discussion of systems of law as a basis for thought, as contrasted to the system of thought called "the faith of Christ." It would encompass the entire set of points of controversy, ranging from God's creation of the physical universe to the second coming of Christ.

The brethren who loved Paul knew of his intellectual capability, his background in the Law of Moses, and his being inspired by the Holy Spirit. They therefore were desirous of seeing the cause for which Paul was imprisoned go forward, and go forward for the glory of God!

JAY WILSON