

Trouble in Philippi

Paul's letter to the Philippians is not particularly polemical, but references to opponents or enemies do appear here and there.

Text	Comment	Possible Reference
1:15–18	Some proclaim Christ out of false motives: envy, rivalry, and selfish ambition.	Christian missionaries who compete with Paul and create factions in the church (cf. 1 Cor. 1:11–13)
1:28–30	Opponents cause the Philippians to suffer the same struggles that Paul experienced as a missionary in the city.	Nonbelievers who persecute Christians (cf. Acts 16:19–39; 2 Cor. 1:8–9; 6:4–5; 11:23–26)
3:2	Evil workers (whom Paul calls “dogs”) insist on “mutilating the flesh.”	Jewish Christians who say that all Christians must be circumcised (cf. Gal. 5:2–12)
3:18–19	Many live as “enemies of the cross,” having their belly as their god, glorying in their shame, and setting their minds on earthly things.	Christians who seek power and glory apart from suffering and service (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18–2:5; 2 Cor. 10–12)

Note that only the second reference (1:28–30) is to troublemakers who are definitely in Philippi. The first reference (1:15–18) is to people in the area where Paul is in prison. The last two references could be to troublemakers who are in Philippi, but it is possible that Paul is simply warning the Philippians about the kinds of people who have caused trouble elsewhere: the Judaizers in Galatia (see “Historical Background” in chap. 16) and the “super-apostles” in Corinth (see “Historical Background” in chap. 15).