



Our Politeuma Is in Heaven!: Paul's Polemical Engagement with the "Enemies of the Cross of Christ" in Philippians 3:18-20

By Gennadi Andreyevich Sergienko

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For many of whom I often told you, and even now am writing with tears, walk as the enemies of the cross of Christ: they walk to their final destruction, their god is the belly and their glory is in shameful things, their minds are earthly bound. But our πολιτεύμα is in heaven from where we expect the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Savior. Philippians 3:18-20 Paul's letters to Philippians show us that this rather outspoken man had plenty of opportunity and cause to aggravate his christian contemporaries. However, for Paul to use such hostility and to name people as "enemies" shows us that we should take note and try to understand the meaning behind his statement. In this work the author asks: who were these enemies? What did they do wrong? Why did they deserve destruction? In search of these questions the investigation looks to the early Christian communities and their formation within the socio-political realities of the urban centers of the Roman Empire. Through this we learn a great deal about the uneven and complex dynamics of the early Christian community and a deep understanding of Paul's warning to them.

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Editorial Review

Review

This detailed work ... brings forward a wealth of inscriptional and literary evidence useful for understanding the cultural setting in which Christians of 1st century Philippi lived out their daily lives. Against this backdrop, Sergienko probes the thesis that the Philippian Christians were compromising their commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by participation in local voluntary organizations that included the practice of emperor worship. Offering a fresh look at ancient evidence and the text of Philippians, Sergienko crafts a suggestive argument for reading this epistle and Paul's call for exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord in light of various religious, social, and cultural obstacles faced by the church. Marianne Meye Thompson
George Eldon Ladd Professor of New Testament Fuller Theological Seminary, California, USA

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