

Committed to Promoting the Gospel

Philippians 1: 12-18

As one reads the opening verses of this letter, it is not immediately evident that Paul was bound in prison. His joy and positive attitude conceal the difficulties he faced daily. Although he was not free to move about within society, Paul determined to continue serving the Lord. He knew that physical limitations did not prevent him from being effective in ministry. Even while in bonds, he determined to advance the Gospel by every means available. He refused to accept defeat.

While we are not physically bound today, we often allow circumstances to hinder our service and witness for the Lord. It is easy to get discouraged and feel as if we are no longer effective in sharing the Gospel. We tend to develop a mindset that dictates our area of service, and if that particular area is no longer available, we assume we can no longer be effective in service. The church needs those with the desire and commitment of Paul, those who will seek to be used of the Lord regardless of present circumstances. There is always an opportunity to be used of the Lord, regardless of our present environment or situation.

As we discuss the [affirmations](#) of Paul within the text, I want to consider the challenging thought: [Committed to Promoting the Gospel](#).

I. The Perspective in Suffering (12-13) – Paul encouraged the Philippian believers to always maintain a proper perspective while serving the Lord. Things were not always as they appeared. Consider:

A. The Recognition (12a) – [But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel](#). Apparently some in Philippi had questioned God's faithfulness to Paul and were having a hard time understanding why he was forced to suffer being imprisoned. He wanted to explain his situation and help them understand the work of God that was taking place even though he was imprisoned. While it seemed desperate on the surface, God was using Paul's bonds to advance the Gospel. He wanted them to live by faith instead of allowing doubt and fear to direct their lives. Paul was actively living out the truths he taught in [Romans 8:28](#).

B. The Results (12b) – [But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel](#). While it appeared that Paul had been removed from active service and was no longer effective in global ministry, just the opposite was true. The bonds Paul suffered had actually "turned out" to further the Gospel.

- We only have the ability to see our current situation. We often judge our circumstances on personal feelings or immediate results. We lack the ability to see the big picture, fully comprehending what God is doing and how He is working in the midst of our situation. While things look desperate and gloomy from our perspective, God can, and does, take our situations and work them out for our good and His glory. The trial you face today is not enjoyable, but God is sovereignly working in your life according to His divine plan. Your perseverance in this trial may actually lead to the salvation or renewal of others!

C. The Reach (13) – *So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places.*

Paul's bonds had become an effective means of communicating the Gospel within Caesar's palace in Rome, and they had resulted in the Gospel being shared throughout the world. He was reaching those within the palace of the most powerful man on earth and God was using the bonds of Paul to take the Gospel to the world. His imprisonment had advanced the Gospel, rather than hindering it.

- Again, we have no way of knowing where or how God will use our current situation to advance the Gospel. If we will remain faithful, regardless of circumstances, God will use our lives for His glory and the advancement of the Kingdom.

II. The Progression through Suffering (14-18a) – Here Paul shares with the church how his bonds had actually caused the Gospel to spread. He speaks of:

A. The Boldness Encouraged (14) – *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* The believers still lived in a world that rejected the Gospel. Persecution and adversity remained prevalent, but Paul's courage and faithfulness to the Lord had encouraged others to boldly proclaim the Gospel. His faith had impacted the lives of others who felt compelled to share their faith, even in the face of persecution.

- Clearly we need those who are willing to share their faith within our society. Our environment closely resembles that of the early church, and our boldness in the faith can have an impact on other believers. As they see us actively living out our faith within a hostile culture, others are encouraged to take a stand for the Lord. Your faithfulness to the Lord will exceed any words you communicate. As we stand for Christ, others see our faith lived out, and they can be encouraged to do the same. I am sure we have been encouraged by others who boldly stood for Christ.

B. The Behavior Examined (15-16) – *Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: [16] The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds.* The bonds of Paul had encouraged others to preach Christ, but their motives proved different than the faithful. While most would view this negatively, Paul was pleased the Gospel was being shared, regardless of motivation. As they considered his bonds, some preached out of envy – *ill will, jealousy, or spite*. Others preached out of strife – *contention, debate, or quarrelling*. Viewing Paul's bonds, some sought to preach out of good will. Paul reveals that those who preached out of contention were not sincere in their work. They literally sought to add to Paul's affliction by preaching the Gospel. Their desire was not to win souls, but add to Paul's suffering.

- These same motivations are prevalent today as well. There are those who are genuinely sincere in their faith and seek to serve the Lord out of good will in an effort to advance the Kingdom. Some merely work among the church out of jealousy or spite. Others do so in hopes of creating division and disputes. Everyone who attends the house of God and portrays a witness for the Lord does not have pure motives. These behaviors have existed since the church was born, and they will continue until the Lord returns. We cannot allow the faulty motives of others hinder our faith and commitment to the Lord.

C. The Benevolence Expressed (17) – *But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.* While the motives of some were lacking, Paul knew many others preached and served the Lord out of love for him and for Christ. They were supportive of Paul and remembered his bonds as they prayed for him. He knew many loved the Lord and genuinely cared for him. I am convinced Paul chose to focus on these, rather than those with faulty motives.

- It is easy to lose our focus and concentrate on those who seem to work against us. We often devote more time to addressing and calming the contentious than we do fellowshiping with those who genuinely love us. I am well aware that everyone is not happy with my ministry, but I have decided to focus on those who love me and are supportive of my efforts. I don't have the time or desire to allow the contentious to dictate my life and service to the Lord.

D. The Benefit Explained (18a) – *What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached.* Paul sums this up with a great perspective. He had determined not to worry about particular motivations. Some preached out of pretence, literally *an outward show that desired to hide their true motivations*. Others preached out of truth. Paul declares – either way, Christ is preached. Either way the Gospel is presented. He knew his bonds were much greater than his physical displeasure. God was at work in the hearts of men. Paul didn't care what a man's motivations were, as long as the Gospel was truthfully shared with those who needed to hear. He rejoiced that Christ was being preached, period!

- That is the perspective we need as well. We will not agree with the approach, or even the motives of some. It may be apparent that they are doing what they do out of pure spite, jealousy, or contention. While these motivations are not pleasing to God, if Christ is being shared, who are we to judge? God can use those whose motives are not right to advance the Gospel if He chooses. I thought of the response Joseph gave to his brothers regarding their betrayal of him – “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.”

III. The Peace within Suffering (18b) – *What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.* Even in the midst of great adversity while in bonds, Paul rejoiced that Christ was being preached. His circumstances left much to be desired and yet Paul enjoyed peace in the Lord. He was not able to move about and proclaim the Gospel, but the Lord has used his bonds to further the Gospel. Paul counted his suffering a small price to pay in order to advance the good news of Jesus Christ. He would gladly suffer if Christ was preached and exalted.

- In our day of mega-ministries and celebrity pastors, we need the attitude Paul possessed. While our church is not known around the world, we too can rejoice that Christ is being preached. Even though we may not agree with the approach or methods of others, we can rejoice that the Gospel is being preached and people are being exposed to the grace of God that leads to salvation. The Kingdom work isn't about us or our personal efforts, but about proclaiming Christ as the crucified and risen Lord who atoned for our sin and grants eternal life. We can rejoice in the preaching of Christ Jesus, regardless of who is heralding the good news!

Conclusion: This passage is certainly relevant for our day. The challenges we face are increasing with each passing day, and yet there is reason for rejoicing. The Gospel is being shared in more places around the world than ever before. The struggles we face give a voice to the Gospel when they are brought to the attention of society. We may have to endure difficulties, but if Jesus is being shared, the difficulties we face are well worth it. I pray we will maintain a proper perspective, even in the midst of trials.

If you are struggling, I encourage you to bring your needs unto the Lord. Seek Him for the help you need, whatever the circumstance. If you are unsaved, I pray you will respond to the call of salvation through repentance and faith. The Lord stands ready to save if you will respond.