

Philippians is a book that can offer new joy and peace in our daily walk as we study. The Philippians were living at the time of Nero's reign in the Roman Empire. Under his command, Nero began an intense persecution directed towards Christians. So Paul wanted the Philippians to be mindful of the big picture; that if they lived, it was for Christ and if they died it was gain. Paul had no easy solutions for them, rather teaching that God can transform our attitudes towards our circumstances by an obedient heart and life lived in light of what God's Word presents. Let that be our prayer this session.

I. JOY IN SPITE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." Philippians 1:12-14

Paul's focus in life was Jesus Christ and sharing the gospel. He viewed life from those lenses and because of that, if the cause of Christ was furthered by his circumstances, if the gospel was preached, then there was joy! His life was Christ's. And these verses give testimony to that passion as the gospel is preached and God is glorified because of the circumstances the Lord has allowed him to be in. Oh that we might have this perspective and fervor that if God is glorified, it is worth it.

But often, circumstances, hardships, and loss can rob us of our joy. Yet Paul is our example of a mind set on Jesus Christ. His life honored the Lord through hardships and God was glorified. And so he writes to encourage not only the Philippians, but you and I as well.

A. THE GOSPEL FURTHERED BY CHAINS

Paul himself was in prison and yet he wanted to encourage the Philippians in their hardship and didn't want them to be discouraged by his. He did not want his chains to be a stumbling block to those he had shared the gospel with. And he wanted them to realize how God was using this for glory.

1. WHAT MAN MEANS FOR EVIL, GOD MEANS FOR GOOD

"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel..." Philippians 1:12

Paul wanted them to understand that the evil which had put him in prison, God had turned to the furtherance of the gospel. This was the same issue in Joseph's life as his brothers sold him to slavery in Egypt and years later God used Joseph as second in command in Egypt to save the nation of Israel from famine. (*Genesis 50:20*)

When the High Priests were trying to shut down the proclamation of Christ as Lord and Savior by crucifying Him on the cross, God used that to save all of mankind. What man meant for evil, God intends for good. Man thinks he can thwart the plans of God, but let us be assured that the acts of man, any acts of man, even evil acts will not change the sovereignty of God. God will even use those things as we see here in Philippians for the furtherance of the kingdom of God.

“furtherance,” Greek *“prokope”* meaning to advance against great odds. Originally a military term used to strike or cut forward against the odds of battle.

In a Biblical context then, it means to see profit with a cost; progress with suffering and opposition. This Greek word is only used one other time in the New Testament, *1 Timothy 4:15*. In both of these passages Paul exhorts that the gospel is progressing with suffering and cost as we move forward in a spiritual battle.

We must remember as we “progress” the cause of Jesus Christ, there will be great opposition and great cost to be made on our part. Paul saw this cost not as loss, but great gain for Jesus Christ. It will be no different representing Christ here in the Capitol. Are you willing to see the gospel furthered knowing there will be cost; suffering and opposition as Paul did *with joy*?

“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains, but the word of God is not chained.”
2Timothy 2:8-9

B. THE GOSPEL IS FURTHERED TO PEOPLE

“so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ”
Philippians 1:13

1. THE GOSPEL SPREADS TO “THE PALACE GUARD”

Man has no power over the Word of God. In Philippians 1:13, Paul goes on to add that since the gospel has been furthered, even against great odds, that the result has become evident to the whole palace guard.

“Palace” Greek word, *“praetorion”* referring to the elite Roman guard of approximately 10,000 men. This guard received double pay, special privileges and favor.

Paul did not focus on his chains, but rather the furtherance of the gospel. Paul was chained to a guard for probably six hours at a time, then another, and then another for 24 hours a day and nearly two years of imprisonment. Being chained to Paul, these guards heard an uncompromising gospel message from a man who lived an uncompromising life. These men knew that Paul did not suffer as an evil doer, but instead

for Christ. Keep in mind that these were the guards that protected Caesar. Paul says that the gospel became evident to “the whole palace guard”. What a way to influence the leaders and the empire of Rome. Later in Philippians Paul writes,

“All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household.” Philippians 4:22

God had a plan that involved chains and suffering for the furtherance of the gospel. How else do you think Paul could have shared Christ with Caesar’s household? God is sovereign. Because of Paul’s chains, he had access to the most elite, Praetorian guard and even Caesar’s household.

2. THE GOSPEL SPREADS “TO ALL THE REST”

The gospel was spread throughout all of Rome as Paul preached faithfully in spite of his chains. Paul didn’t focus on his chains, but rather on his passion in life, Jesus Christ!

3. PAUL’S CHAINS ARE “IN CHRIST”

It became evident to all around that Paul’s chains were not from Rome. Paul wasn’t a prisoner because he had done something wrong. Paul had become a prisoner because he was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember, the furtherance of the gospel will come with opposition.

C. THE GOSPEL IS FURTHERED/CONFIDENT RESULT

“and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” Philippians 1:14

Many of the believers in Rome were probably discouraged from receiving so much opposition and persecution from sharing the gospel. Yet, as they saw Paul and how God used his situation to further the gospel all the way to Caesar’s household, they were more than encouraged. They were confident and courageous in sharing with more boldness!

They saw Paul as a living example of what they knew to be a true servant of Christ with a sovereign God at work. The gospel was being spread in spite of persecution. Now they knew they could gladly suffer in Paul’s company for the sake of Jesus Christ. And Paul was using their testimony to encourage the Philippian believers.

“Confident,” Greek, *“peitho,”* meaning to be absolutely convinced of, boldness without fear.

In Philippians 1:6, the word confident is used and we were reminded that it meant boldness without fear. The brethren were absolutely convinced of the gospel of Jesus Christ that they had boldness to preach and teach without fear in spite of hardship. They had great courage. As Paul spoke of these believers, he knew this would strengthen and encourage the believers in Philippi who were under persecution for believing in Jesus Christ as well.

What about us? Are we able to boldly share the gospel message seeing that Paul suffered and we may suffer as well? Can we see ourselves suffering for the sake of Christ with all joy and know God will further His kingdom through it? Our culture is really no different than Paul's, totally antagonistic to Jesus Christ.

*In spite of suffering, Paul had joy because his passion was to live for Jesus Christ. **How will we live and how will you represent Christ on the floor of the House or Senate—this day?** “However it goes with me, I labor that you may have the Gospel preached among you. Though it cost my life, I think it well bestowed.” John Perry, Martyred in Wales, 1593*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIBLE STUDIES

- **Legislators, Governor & Spouses:** Tuesday, 7:15 AM, Capitol Basement, Room 0109, Breakfast Served
- **Staff, Lobbyists, Journalists & Sergeants:** Tuesdays at Noon, SSB, 1525 Sherman, RM #603, Across Colfax from Capitol