

# Philippians 1:12-18

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 5/13/2007

## How can we endure the difficulties of the Christian life?

### Prayer

You are a gracious and wonderful God. We praise You so much that You would send Your Son to die for us, that You demonstrate Your love in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Father, we praise You that You were pleased to crush Him and that He willingly came and did Your will. Father, we thank You that He willingly suffered, even to the point of death, becoming obedient all the way to what You had called Him to do, to die for us. We praise You that death could not hold Him in the grave, and we praise You that He rose from the dead and now reigns at Your right hand in His rightful place. Father we pray as we look into Your Word that You would take Your Word and pierce our hearts, we recognize we're not able to comprehend it or understand it apart from You. We ask You to open our minds to understand the scriptures. And Father I pray if there is anyone of us in here who might have sinned, that's un-confessed, that we would just come before You, confess those sins to You, cleanse our hearts Lord God, prepare us to receive Your Word. Thank You for this morning now, in Jesus' name. Amen.

### Sermon

Well throughout the Christian community there's as we know, and we talk about it here every once and a while to warn the body, there's a different gospel out there. There's a gospel of Jesus to take care of you and fix your needs right now rather than the gospel, the true gospel that Jesus presented, where He would say you need to count the cost. For what will a man profit if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? To truly come to Christ we need to lose everything to ultimately gain everything. We know from scripture that if you truly come to faith in Jesus Christ, and you desire then and thus to live Godly you will be persecuted. Jesus shares in John 15, He says in verse 18, John 15:18,

***<sup>18</sup> If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. [John 15:18-20]***

Certainly the reality of the Christian life is that there is suffering and trials and persecution. Now sometimes we, in our naivety, or in our sin, see our own consequences to our own sin as suffering for Christ, and that's not what I'm talking about today. Certainly we know in the book of Hebrews God does discipline those whom He loves, and we are not to faint or to regard it lightly when He disciplines us, but to respond properly. And also we know there are consequences for sin. So, we know that that's not what we're talking about today in this passage. But ultimately, we you want to follow Christ, you are going to suffer. And how should we respond and endure the difficulties that following Christ brings? And I believe today as we look at Paul's example in Philippians 1, we're going to see that, as he shares with

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the Philippians what the Lord is doing through His difficulties for the Lord's glory. So would you turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians 1:12-18.

Now before we get to the passage I want to remind us of the context. As we saw in the beginning, the apostle Paul is the author of the book of Philippians. He is writing to these Philippian believers while he is imprisoned in Rome, he is under house arrest, he is under chains as we will see, he is chained most likely to a Roman guard 24/7. And he writes this letter to a church that is dear in his heart. The Philippian church, the church that began when Paul shared the gospel with Lydia at the river in Philippi, and God opened her heart to understand. And then we have the wonderful truth as Paul and Silas were beaten because of Paul casting out a demon from a slave girl, and she was losing her profit, they brought up a riot against him. As Paul and Silas were beaten, they praised God for what He was doing, and God loosed their chains, brought an earthquake. And the Philippian jailer, who is about to kill himself, Paul tells him to stop, and he says "what must I do to be saved?" And the Philippian jailer heard the Word, and his household heard the Word, and they were saved. And we have the nucleus of the Philippian church.

Now Paul was very close to the Philippian church, he was very close to them and they were very close to him. We see that they were the only church, chapter 4, that actually supported him at certain times in his ministry. And Paul was very dear to them, and they were very dear to him. Actually, Paul was so dear to them that they sent Epaphroditus to go check on him, they sent him to bring a gift to him, as we'll see in chapter 2. And Paul was greatly appreciative of that.

Now the book of Philippians we know was written for a myriad of reasons. As we study the book we see how much the Lord wants us to know, we see all those things He desires us to know. But specifically Paul shares that he was thankful, in chapter 4, for their gifts, he warns them in chapter 3 of the false teachers, he exhorts them in chapter 2 to have the same mind, the mind of Christ, and he encourages them in chapter 1, as we will see to continue in the struggle.

I've shared this a couple weeks in a row, but I like what Harry Ironside says about the book of Philippians. He sums it up in "Christ is all". He says, chapter 1 – Christ is life, chapter 2 – Christ is our example, chapter 3 – Christ is our object, chapter 4 – Christ is our strength and supply. This book is about Christ.

Now we've seen so far in the book of Philippians that Paul and Silas explained themselves and identified themselves as bond-slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ, sold out to do His will. They were writing to the Philippian saints, those who had been set apart for His glory, and supplied by His grace with the resulting peace. And we saw last week that Paul, everytime he thought of them and was brought to remembrance, he prays to God for them, he prayed for them. He was thankful for God's work in them, and he was confident that God would complete that work in them. Wonderful verses we've seen so far.

And today, I believe Paul begins his actual correspondence after his introduction in this letter. And we're going to see right off the bat Paul's heart for what the Lord, inspiring Paul, wants the Philippian church to know. So I believe we're going to see today how we can endure the difficulties that following Christ

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brings. And I want to qualify that, it's not just the difficulties of life in general because certainly our sin and consequences bring that on, but the difficulties for the true believer who is following Christ. And I believe the first thing we're going to see we need to do is to realize that God does allow and ordain difficult circumstances.

Verse 12, Philippians 1,

***<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, <sup>14</sup> and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. [Philippians 1:12-14]***

Now a few brief observations as we begin here. Paul is addressing the brethren, "Now I want you to know, brethren." These are those in whom he called saints earlier. Those who are set apart, those who are seen as righteous because they are in Christ. They are the brethren, those who are in the family of God, adopted into the family because of what Christ has done. Paul says, I want you to know brethren. And this is a strong word, he desires them to know, it's his great desire as he sits in chains for them to know something. Well what is that Paul wants them to know? He says, now I want you to know brethren that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. That's how Paul basically starts his correspondence in this letter.

Now why does Paul begin this way? He's given a greeting, he's shared his feelings toward the Philippians, and now he says, I want you to know brethren. Why does he begin this way? I believe, I think in context, because the Philippian church was so close to him, they were deeply concerned for him. And quite possibly they had taken on an attitude that we can take on at times, where they thought maybe the gospel had hit a road block because Paul was in prison. The Lord had used Paul so greatly to spread the gospel throughout Europe and Asia, and now maybe quite possibly Paul being in prison, the gospel has hit a road block. And I think Paul is addressing that right away. And he says, now I want you to know, and the word is *ginosko*, to comprehend, to understand brethren that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.

You know, so often we will have this mindset too of the Philippians, possibly, that we think that our circumstances quite possibly impede the work of God. That the things that God is allowed in our lives impede the ministry, and we might even say to ourselves, if I was only this, or if this was only happening to me, then I could serve the Lord better this way. That was not Paul's mindset. If I was only well, or if I was only out of this wheelchair, or if I was only not suffering at work, if I was only whatever it might be. Paul says I want you to know, I want you to understand, I want you to comprehend brethren that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. Paul lovingly shares the truth.

Now with this is mind, what were Paul's circumstances? What were the circumstances that Paul was speaking about here? Verse 12, I'll read this again, Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances (or literally the things according to, or the things down upon me, my circumstances) have

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turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ. What then were Paul's circumstances? Paul clearly shares in verse 13, so that my imprisonment, or literally my chains, in the cause of Christ. Paul's circumstances, the things down upon him, the things that are holding him down on a physical level are literally chains. Paul is chained 24/7, as we will see, to a Roman guard. And he is telling these Philippians that these circumstances in the cause of Christ have become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard.

Now one thing we need to recognize here, as he says my circumstances, so often we use the word "my" or "I", we start to personalize that, we start to think about ourselves, and we start to focus on our circumstances. Paul is no way identifying that it's his life, it's his ministry, those things. He is speaking ultimately as we know, that the life Christ was living through him and the resulting circumstances is what he is talking about. Paul understood, as we should understand, 1 Corinthians 6:19, that we are not our own, we have been bought with a price. Paul made it clear in scripture that he did not consider his life of any account dear to himself.

Wonderful passage in Acts 20, and I'll read this to you, verse 22, as Paul is giving his farewell to the Ephesian elders, and he is preparing to share his final commands to these elders. He says in verse 22,

***<sup>22</sup> And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. (That doesn't sound like the temporal abundant life, that sounds like the suffering for the glories to follow. And he says here) <sup>24</sup> But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself. [Acts 20:22-24]***

That's an amazing statement from a follower of Jesus Christ. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself. When he says my circumstances, he's not talking about the dearness of his life, the dearness of his situation. He says, "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." Paul understood why God was allowing him to live and be here, and he didn't think of his life as dear at all.

I want to ask you, do you consider your life as dear to you? Do you consider your life as dear to yourself? If so you're not going to finish the course. Paul understood that he had died and his life was hidden in Christ. Paul would say, as we will see next week, Lord willing, to live is Christ, to die is gain. He says in verse 21, if you look down there in Philippians 1,

***<sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (And then he's going to explain that, if I'm going to live on here's why I'm here) <sup>22</sup> But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. <sup>23</sup> But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; <sup>24</sup> yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. <sup>25</sup> And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith. [Philippians 1:21-25]***

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Paul understood why he was here. Now his circumstances were not about the apostle Paul, they were the circumstances that the Lord had allowed in his life as he was finishing the course of the ministry that God had called him to. And he says, so that my imprisonment for the cause of Christ, verse 13, has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard. Paul understood that he had been crucified with Christ, that he no longer lives, but Christ lives in Him, Galatians 2:20, and the life that he lives in the flesh he lived by faith in the Son of God. So often our life consists of circumstances, as I shared earlier, that arise from our own sinful choices. We all sin, if anyone says they don't sin, they're a liar John says. But ultimately as we come to Christ, we become more and more like Christ. But Paul's not talking about sin here as his detractors might have said "Paul's sin, that's why he is in prison, God's punishing him probably for that". We need to understand and recognize that there is no favor in God's eyes if we endure the consequences of our sin. But I need to remind myself, and you also that God's a gracious God. When you sin and you confess it, He certainly forgives you, and sometimes He graciously removes consequences, sometimes He doesn't. But He's gracious and He's with you.

So now, before we can learn how to endure the difficulties that God allows when we follow Him, we need to recognize that maybe some of our difficulties are not because we are following Jesus. And we need to recognize that. But know that now that we trust Him, the difficulties that do come upon us will be because of faith in Christ, and we'll see that God will use those difficulties for His glory. Folks, if you're in financial difficulty because you sinned, confess it, move forward. If you're in relational difficulty because you sinned, confess it and move forward. If you're having a difficult time at work because you're not doing your work well and heartily unto the Lord, confess it and move forward. There's no credit if we sin and are treated harshly. Paul's circumstances were not because of sin, as we will see in this passage.

What then were these circumstances? He says my imprisonment, or literally in the Greek, fetters, bonds or chains; my chains, my fetters. In Acts 20:17, the apostle Paul set foot in Jerusalem, having been warned by the Holy Spirit as we saw in Acts 20, that bonds and afflictions awaited him. He was falsely accused by his own people. He was nearly killed by the Jews. He ended up in prison, narrowly escaped a flogging by pleading his citizenship. He then escaped a Jewish plot to kill him. He was transferred to Caesarea, tried before Felix and Festus, appealing to Caesar; he defended Christ before king Agrippa, all the while testifying of Jesus Christ. And if that wasn't enough, on the sea voyage to Rome, he was shipwrecked and he finally arrived in Rome. And we see the circumstances of Paul's imprisonment in Rome in Acts 28, and I'll read verse 16, Luke is writing, "And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him." Most likely Paul was chained to a soldier 24/7. And Acts 28:30,

***<sup>30</sup> And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, <sup>31</sup> preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered. [Acts 28:30]***

Folks, Paul's chains were not because of some crime, Paul didn't go to jail because of some crime, it was because of his stand for the gospel of Christ. Philemon 10,

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**<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my child, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, Onesimus, <sup>11</sup> who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. (He's speaking of a slave who ran away and then came to faith through Paul sharing the gospel. He says) <sup>12</sup> And I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, <sup>13</sup> whom I wished to keep with me, that in your behalf he might minister to me in my (chains, or) imprisonment for the gospel. [Philemon 10-13]**

Paul was chained because of the gospel of Christ, that's why he was in prison. And he wanted these dear Philippian brothers and sisters to know that his circumstances had turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. He hadn't hit a roadblock; the gospel was not hindered as we will see. In God's sovereign hand it was doing exactly what he desired. And I want to ask you, what circumstances are dominating you? What chains has God allowed in your life because you are following Him? Mothers, because you're being obedient and raising your children, and the difficulties that you have. Maybe you've been chained to some type of disease that God has allowed. Maybe you've been chained to a difficult family situation that is not your fault. Maybe it's a difficult work situation. What things has God allowed to bind you? So often we want to get out of those things. And here Paul wants them to know that his circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.

Folks, the world and many believers, maybe even you, may see the difficulties that God allows as a hindrance to serving Christ. But God desires to use that very weakness and difficulty to advance the gospel. You know, and I hear this, there's a guy on the radio, Jay Sekulow, he helps Christian guys and stuff. And lot of times that's really great what he's doing, but one time he got a phone call, he was talking about the chaplains who are not allowed to pray in Jesus' name, and the person calling basically was saying, well why don't they just go to jail and trust Christ in that, do the right thing? And he said, oh no, we don't want them to go to jail because then they wouldn't be able to serve Christ. That's absolutely the opposite of what this passage is saying. That God ordained Paul's chains for the furtherance of the gospel. And we need to not become our own gods and figure out what God is doing, but rather submit to Him and trust Him. And the apostle Paul did, and we see that in this passage.

Now at this point, what were the results of this grand plan that God had for the apostle Paul by chaining him up to a Roman guard 24/7? Again, verse 12, now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. He says my chains have turned out, or resulted in, the greater progress. And one Greek scholar, a believing Greek scholar, I need to share that. There are Greek scholars who don't know Christ, and I wouldn't listen to them. Believing Greek scholar, Kenneth Wuest shares concerning this word progress, he says it means "to cut before", it is spoken of pioneer wood cutters which proceeded the Roman army, or regular army, cutting a road through an impenetrable forest, thus making it possible for pioneer advances of the army into the latter regions". And Paul is saying here, I want you to know that my circumstances have turned out to bring about this pioneering progress of the gospel. Who would have ever thought that? Who would have ever known that that's the way God would have done it. His chains, the very thing that man would think would hinder the ministry brought about pioneer progress of the gospel.

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Now some of you might be saying, well what's the gospel? He's talking about the gospel, well what is the gospel? Paul shares in 1 Corinthians 15, the gospel. Verse 1,

***<sup>1</sup> Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, (The gospel is preached, received, and those stand in it) <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (That statement is packed, Christ the Messiah, the King, He's the King of kings and Lord of lords, that Christ died for our sins, that we are sinful, we are sinful, we need a savior. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. All of us like sheep have gone astray, but He has cause the iniquity of us all to fall upon Him) <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [1 Corinthians 15:1-5]***

The gospel is the message of what Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords did when He left His glorious throne and came and lived the perfect life and became sin for us that we might receive His righteousness. Paul said there were pioneer advances in the gospel because of the chains that God had allowed.

Now it's interesting, and we need to recognize that Paul does not say his circumstances advanced his desires. His circumstances advanced the gospel. Paul's life was completely about the proclamation of Christ. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And folks, sometimes we so often see our circumstances totally in light of ourselves, rather than in light of Christ. Paul knew that his chains brought about the pioneering advance of the gospel. Folks, we need to stop leaning on our own understanding and looking at our circumstances and responding in our own wisdom. We need to trust in Christ and know that He'll work it out for His glory. We need to believe what He says in His Word.

Now at this point, we see some specifics that Paul gives concerning this pioneer advance of the gospel. Again verse 12, now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else. Now up this point, Paul had ministered to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles, and then he had ministered a little bit during his trials to those Roman governors. But mostly, he had ministered to ordinary people, and now because of his chains, we see that Christ has become well known, verse 13, throughout the whole praetorian guard.

And you say, what's the praetorian guard? What is that? Well the word praetorian could speak of a Roman field camp, a headquarters of a Roman field camp. It could speak of a Roman governor's residence or palace. It could speak of the Emperor's guard in Rome. And I believe in context that's what it's speaking of, because later on in chapter 4 Paul says all the saints greet you, especially those who

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belong to Caesar's household. Now the praetorian guard were the Emperor's personal bodyguards, it consisted of several thousand elite Roman soldiers stationed at key residences of the Emperor. And Paul was guarded by them, and we see ultimately that the gospel had gone forth to the whole praetorian guard. That's amazing! That's thousands of people talking about Christ because of one man in chains. And we could ascertain as we saw in Acts 28 that he was chained to one of these guards 24/7. But he had the freedom to share the gospel unhindered.

Now historically they would rotate the guards every four to six hours, so every four to six hours another guard comes in and chains up to Paul, for two years. One pastor, Will Pounds, writes concerning this, He says,

*Every night in the barracks another little fire was ignited as another soldier told about being chained to that little Jew. Testimony after testimony, day after day, "Christ has become well-known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else." For a two-year period Paul's congregation was a constant rotation of the finest regiment in the Roman army. Only eternity will tell us how many of these men came to know Christ as their personal Savior. What a transformation of the elite! "Well, what was your assignment today?" "Man, I was chained to that little Jew from Tarsus everyone is talking about. All he talks about is a Jew who was crucified and rose from the dead. He says He is alive. No one has ever survived a Roman crucifixion. He dictates letters to be sent out to groups all over the empire telling people about this resurrection of the dead. People come to see him and all he talks about is Jesus Christ. And man he prays for hours talking to this God-man who rose from the dead. He never shuts up!*

He's speculating on how Paul probably spoke to these people, day in and day out, but ultimately from scripture we know that Christ had become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard because of Paul's chains. Who would have thought that? God had ordained His chains for the progress of the gospel. How about you? Do you see the difficulties ordained by Christ? Ordained ultimately for the advancement of His Word? I hope you do.

Well now we're going to see another aspect of this pioneering progress of the gospel. We're going to see that it instilled fearless courage in most Roman believers to speak His Word. Again, I'll go back to verse 12 to read this whole statement together,

***<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,(And I think I didn't share that, but I think "everyone else" would speak of those would speak of those in Caesar's household) <sup>14</sup> and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. [Philippians 1:12-14]***

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Usually prefer the NASB translation, the New King James is a good translation too, but here I think the NASB doesn't catch the statement exactly the way it is in the original language. A straightforward reading of this leads us to believe that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, that these brethren are the ones who came to faith because of his imprisonment. Well certainly people did come to faith because of his imprisonment, but I don't think that's what he's saying. Actually, I like the New King James translation, and one of the reasons I think it's not that case, as we'll see, is because he doesn't use the word for faith, he uses a different word for confidence. It speaks of being persuaded or confident.

This is my translation, and most of the brethren, having become confident in the Lord by my chains, have far more courage to speak the Word of God without fear. I think he's speaking about the Roman believers who see Paul's confidence in chains, and now because of that, they have confidence to speak the Word of God without fear. And again, Kenneth Wuest translates this in an excellent manner,

*The great majority of the believers, come to a state of settled confidence in the Lord, having been influenced by the gentle persuasion of my shackles to take that step of confidence, are more abundantly bold, fearlessly breaking their silence and speaking the word of God.*

I think that is what is happening. They saw Paul in chains, who was confident in Christ, and now most, not that most of the brethren, that means almost everybody, almost all the believers, not just the pastors were now able to speak the Word with confidence. Most of the brethren have far more courage to speak the Word of God without fear. What a wonderful statement. What a wonderful pioneer advance of the gospel in Rome. Most of the brethren, literally the greater part of the brethren, the majority, all but a few, the vast majority. What an amazing work God did through the chains of Paul as he submitted to Christ, he was certainly not ashamed of the gospel as he wrote the Romans ten years earlier, and now they were not ashamed of the gospel also. Praise God.

The very thing the Philippians thought might be hindering the gospel, God was using to advance His Word, and is this not how God works? Oh brother and sister, we put God in a box so often, by leaning on our own understanding. When difficulties come into our life because we're following Christ, God has ordained these difficulties, whatever shade they are, for the advancement of His Word. If someone were to look at your life, if someone were to be chained to you and observe your response to the difficulties God allows? Would they be more confident to speak the Word of God, or would they recognize and see a complaining spirit? I hope the former is true.

So Paul saw his circumstances as part of God's grand plan to spread the Word, and although Paul was in prison, the Word of God was not imprisoned. 2 Timothy 2:8,

***<sup>8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment (or chains) as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. [2 Timothy 2:8-9]***

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The Word of God is not imprisoned by your circumstances as you might be tempted to think. And Paul begins this letter, his correspondence, sharing this wonderful truth as an example to these Philippians, who later on certainly would suffer. Chapter 1, verse 29, for to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you see in me, and now hear to be in me.

He's saying, guess what, it's coming for you too. And Paul, by the Spirit of God is preparing them on how to respond because the gospel is not imprisoned. Paul saw his circumstances as part of God's grand plan. I want to ask you, is the Word of God imprisoned because of your attitude towards your circumstances? When we submit to Christ and fully understand why He's allowing those things, then you will be able to speak the Word of God with confidence, without fear.

Now Paul had been speaking about most the brethren who were speaking His Word without fear, but he needs to qualify this statement because obviously, as we will see, there were some people who were actually speaking the Word out of envy and strife. Some were using the wrong motives to actually bring distress upon Paul in his imprisonment. But Paul had ultimately saw God's hand in that, and he rejoiced, verse 15,

***<sup>15</sup> Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; <sup>16</sup> the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; <sup>17</sup> the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed... [Philippians 1:15-18]***

Now at this point, Paul reveals that even his detractors that have arisen because of his chains will also bring glory to God. He speaks of those in verse 15 who are preaching Christ even from envy and strife. And it's important that we see that preaching Christ. Evidently there were some preaching Christ because they envied Paul, they saw Paul and the popularity that he had and they envied him. And there were certainly strife between Paul and these people. And in verse 17 we see their motives. Paul strips them forth, he doesn't say they were good by the way, we'll see what he says about them. "<sup>17</sup> the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment."

There was most likely a group of people that thought Paul had sinned and they had an animosity towards him, and they were proclaiming Christ out of own selfish motives, to raise themselves above, wanting to cause distress to Paul. Here in these verses we see a contrast between the motives between these two groups, those proclaiming Christ, some good and some bad. Verse 15, let's look at the bad again, <sup>15</sup> ***Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife.*** They were envious and there was strife, and that's why they were doing it. Verse 17, <sup>17</sup> ***the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition,*** (they wanted to raise themselves up) ***rather than from pure motives,*** (and ultimately we see they wanted to hurt Paul) ***thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.***

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But there were those who preached out of good will, verse 15, the end, "...but some also from good will; the latter (speaking of those doing it from good will) do it out of love, (that's the right motive, you share the gospel because you love them, you love Christ, you're being obedient) knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. They understood that God had ordained Paul's chains so that he could share and defend the gospel of Christ. Now it's important before we jump ahead and accept false gospels because of a misunderstanding of this passage, and believe me, there are people who take this passage specifically and say, "Well I rejoice in that gospel of Joel Osteen, I rejoice in that gospel of so-and-so because Paul rejoiced, and they were doing it out of envy and strife."

We need to be careful because this passage says they were preaching Christ, and Paul in many of his letters comes down completely hard and thoroughly on those who would preach a false gospel. Even in chapter 3 of Philippians he says beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision. In Galatians 1 he says, if anyone comes with a different gospel let him be accursed, let him go to hell. Here, these people didn't have a different gospel, they had the right gospel. They didn't have a seeker sensitive felt need gospel that appeals to our flesh, they preached Christ. They preached on the wrong motives, but they preached Christ, and in that, as we will see, Paul would even rejoice in God's sovereign hand in that.

It's apparent that those with bad motives here were preaching an accurate gospel, otherwise as Paul had done throughout scripture, he would have condemned it. This is why Paul does not condemn the message, but in his language, he condemns their motives, he certainly does. So certainly they hear the gospel, the gospel spoken of here by these wrong motives, those with wrong motives was not a perverted gospel, it was preaching Christ. Verse 15,

<sup>15</sup> **Some, to be sure, are preaching** (proclaiming, kerusso, they're proclaiming Christ ) **Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;** (some are proclaiming Christ from good will) <sup>16</sup> **the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;** <sup>17</sup> **the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.** (What's the result here?) <sup>18</sup> **What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense** (the word, "as a cloak", they're cloaking their true motives, but he's saying they're preaching Christ) **or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. [Philippians 1:15-18]**

Even through the evil man who tried to cause difficulty in Paul's imprisonment, Christ was proclaimed and thus Paul could rejoice.

Paul understood the power of God's Word, the power of God even from wrong motives. Hebrews 4:12,

<sup>12</sup> **For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.** <sup>13</sup> **And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. [Hebrews 4:12-13]**

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If you don't know Christ today, the Word still pierces through. 1 Thessalonians 2:12,

***<sup>12</sup> And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, (Paul is writing) you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. [1 Thessalonians 2:12]***

Paul says, Romans 1:16, <sup>16</sup> ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*** Paul understood the power of God's Word, and He rejoiced at the proclamation that had arisen out of his imprisonment, some for good and some for bad, but God was sovereign, and the Word kept spreading, and Paul rejoiced. And as the final result we see in the apostle Paul, verse 18, What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this (he doesn't say I rejoice in my chains, I rejoice in the proclamation, the results of what God is doing through this difficulty) I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.

And later on we see that all of Paul's joy is in the context of a relationship with the living God, rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice. What brings you joy? The proclamation of the Word, the work that God does through the difficulties and suffering He allows in our lives. So how can we endure the difficulties of life that God allows when we follow Christ? First of all, we need to see our circumstances as part of God's grand plan to advance His Word concerning Christ, that's why. We're here to proclaim His excellencies. We're not here to live an abundant life apart from Christ. 1 Peter 2, we have a wonderful statement by the apostle Peter, he says in verse 9, <sup>9</sup> ***But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION....*** He's talking about those who have been born again to a living hope. 1 Peter 2, verse 9, and then he says, ***...so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.***

Most of the brethren were confidently, without fear proclaiming the Word of God because of Paul's chains. How about your life? Does your life encourage your response to the suffering that God has allowed, to encourage, to proclaim Christ also without fear? Now again, some of you are in difficult circumstances because you've sinned. Confess it and move forward, don't regard and faint when the Lord disciplines. If He's disciplining you, don't faint and don't regard it lightly, respond to it and you will be trained by it, and there will be the peaceful fruit of righteousness, and you praise God for that. And sometimes God is gracious and He takes away the consequences, sometimes He doesn't. But now that you're following Christ, the difficulties that you do encounter for following Him, how do you respond to that? What would the people who are chained to you in your life, what would they say your response is? What about your family, what about your kids, what about those God has chained to you at work? What would they say? Paul had the mind of Christ, he understood what Christ was doing through these difficulties, and he knew that the gospel was not imprisoned although he was. Do you feel the same way?

**Prayer**

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Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You that our circumstances are the means in which You use to advance Your kingdom, that You take the difficulties and the sufferings and You use them for Your glory. Father, I pray You would renew our minds, You would help us to understand when we experience those difficulties what You are doing in the midst of those. Help us to respond in a way that glorifies You. Father, help us to trust You and abide in You, and to see them through the lens of Your Word. And Father I pray that our response to the difficulties You allow would bring about the furtherance of Your Word for Your glory. Father I pray we would have Your mind in understanding from Your Word concerning difficulties You allow. Thank You so much for Your Word, thank You so much for Your Son, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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