

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JAN 23RD-24TH, 2021 // BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS
PAUL AND THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

This short letter was written while Paul was imprisoned for his faith in Rome. 10 years earlier, Paul had started a church in this area of Greece and commissioned Epaphroditus to be the pastor. This letter was written to thank the Philippians for their prayers and financial support and to address some of the problems in the church. Philippi was located in the northern part of Greece and named after Alexander the Great's father. It was a fairly populated city with a huge gold-mining industry. It was also the home of many pagan religions.

GREETINGS (PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11) TO THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI

Paul was writing on behalf of himself and Timothy, his protégé, to the "saints," "overseers," and "deacons" of the Philippian church.

- **Saint** in this passage means people still alive that are living Jesus-honoring lifestyles. **Overseers** would have been pastors and elders. **Deacons** would have been the ministers of physical needs in the city.

GIVING THANKS FOR THEIR PARTNERSHIP

Paul had first preached to the Philippians over ten years before his letter. Since then, Paul had received prayer, moral, and financial support from this church for his ministry.

- **The faithfulness and consistent striving to help advance the gospel** from this church brought Paul great joy because **it revealed the maturity of their faith.**

"...HE WHO STARTED A GOOD WORK..."

V6 is important for Believers. Paul gives his assurance that because the church has started a "good work" in obedience to what God wants them to do, God "will carry it on to completion."

- As Christians it is easy to slide back into a fear that God may not come through, but **if we are faithful God will complete what He has started in us!**

BUILDING JESUS' REPUTATION IN OUR LIVES

As we pray, read the Word, attend church, and grow our community of Christians, we start to live and think more like God. This is called **sanctification**, or being set apart for God to use.

- **The more we're sanctified, the more we trust God in all aspects of our lives. We must allow God to build his reputation in us.**

GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE AND DISCERNMENT

After sharing his love for the Philippians, he strongly encourages them to keep growing in their faith, specifically in their "knowledge" and "every kind of discernment."

- 1 Cor. 12 mentions that **knowledge and discernment** are Gifts of the Spirit. **These are tools necessary for us to remain strong and grow closer to God and others.**

WE SHOULD BE MAKING BETTER CHOICES

Because of the sanctification process and the gifts of knowledge and discernment that God gives those that pursue Him, **we should be making better choices as we mature.**

- **Not that we are perfect, but we should become "pure and blameless," and "filled with the fruit of righteousness" because of our relationship with Jesus.**

WHAT IS THE STATE OF OUR CHARACTER?

The "fruit of righteousness" is our character and moral qualities set by the standard of God's Word. The Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5) should be evident in the Believer.

- We should all be evolving towards Christ. So, we must ask the question, **"Am I living differently as time goes on because of my walk with Jesus?"**

CONTENT IN ADVERSITY (PHILIPPIANS 1:12-20)

"...HAS ACTUALLY ADVANCED THE GOSPEL"

Paul was writing this letter while imprisoned in Rome for his beliefs. While in prison, many other people had to step up to spread the gospel, therefore it spread even more during his persecution.

- His 1st point was that **no human restraints or institutions can slow down the work of God!**

FROM IMPERIAL GUARDS DOWN TO COMMONERS

Paul mentions that the Roman guards all the way down to people in the streets were hearing that he was imprisoned because of his faith. At the same time, other Christians were "fearlessly" speaking the truth to non-Christians.

- **The love, character, and boldness of faithful Christians will reach every kind of person.**

SOME PEOPLE HAD WRONG MOTIVES

Paul's imprisonment spawned missionary zeal based on both good and bad motives. Some people wanted to spread the gospel for selfish gain, not for a love of God and others.

- We see this often today. The difficulty is to be like Paul and "in this...rejoice." His logic **was even if some have bad motives, the gospel is being spoken and it still liberates.**

LOOK AT THE VERBIAGE IN THESE VERSES!

The language of v12-20 is of joy, excitement, and encouragement for what is happening in the Kingdom of God. Though Paul is in prison under a hostile gov't, he's focused on doing the work of Jesus in the community. **Note that Paul doesn't get caught up in politics but continually focuses on the advancement of the gospel!**

"MY EAGER EXPECTATION AND HOPE..."

Paul expresses that he prays and hopes that if things get worse he will have the "courage" to honor Christ with his body "whether by life or by death."

- **If it takes prison, sacrificing comforts in this life, or even putting our literal lives on the line, are we completely ready to lay it down for Jesus?**

FACING PRESSURE (PHILIPPIANS 1:21-26)

THE THESIS OF PHILIPPIANS?

V21 may be the most famous passage in this book. This simple but profound phrase shows us that **the source of life and what makes this difficult life worth living is Jesus.** It also shows us that **if we live for Christ, death is our gain because we go on to be with Him forever.**

GIVEN THE CHOICE...

Paul wasn't contemplating suicide when he debated if living or dying would be better. It was a matter of his personal desire. Did he want to continue to labor for Christ on earth, or would he rather move on from the hardships of this life?

- This musing of death was a reminder to Paul and to us that **our lives are to be used for the work of God's Kingdom.**

"SINCE I AM PERSUADED OF THIS..."

Paul knew the mind of Jesus, and because of this, he knew his work wasn't finished until God took him into eternity. Though a life dedicated to Christ is difficult and will face persecution, Paul understands that **"progress and joy in the faith" is the key to living a life of contentment and peace amidst adversity.**

CITIZENSHIP (PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30)

CALLING US TO A HIGHER STANDARD

Because Jesus has given His all for our inclusion into His kingdom, Paul explains that we should honor Him by **living lives "worthy of the gospel of Christ."**

- We do this by **following His commands, praying, loving others, creating relationships, helping those in need, and just our day-to-day character.**

"...STANDING FIRM IN ONE SPIRIT, IN ONE ACCORD."

Paul encourages us to stand united **"contending together for the faith of the gospel, not being frightened in any way by your opponents."**

- We should strive to work with people who uphold the gospel, **but many professing Christians have been frightened by the pressure of culture**, therefore adopting heresies and making them unfit to partner with.

WAIT, SUFFERING IS A PRIVILEGE?

Christians have two privileges: to believe in Jesus and to suffer for Him.

- To suffer for Christ is to have a closer connection with Him. **Jesus forfeited His rights, comforts, and eventually His life for others. We are to do the same, and do it with joy!** This is only possible if we love and have a relationship with Jesus.

THE CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN / AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

The Christian life should be marked by love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control. Though we make mistakes, as we grow in our faith we should be evolving in character. We should also be seeking knowledge, discernment, and wisdom. We must know that this road can be arduous, but God wants to walk it with us. And as long as we have the Creator, we can have a peace that passes all understanding. As citizens of heaven, we must be dedicated to His kingdom and trust that His principles and teachings are the only hope for us. We cannot live in fear or hatred of governments, cultures, or any other worldly institutions. We are to love all people, praying for their well-being, in the hopes that God will touch their hearts. We must also remember that Jesus is their only hope, prompting us to share the gospel.

GROWING DURING ADVERSITY

The Fruit of the Spirit is not contingent on the climate of the world's culture. Because of the Holy Spirit, we can find contentment in all seasons of life. It is actually adversity that often sparks the pursuit of God. God uses pressure to get our attention and to hopefully steer us into following Him instead of broken systems.