

Philippians

Lesson 3

Chapter 1:12-30

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Lesson 3

Philippians 1:12-30 Paul's Chains Advance the Gospel

Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. *Philippians 1:14*

Prayers

Introduction

Paul includes a very important life lesson in this portion of his letter to his beloved friends, tolerance and finding joy in common ground. After Paul was imprisoned, others found the courage to preach the gospel. Some preached the gospel out of humility and love for Christ; others were prideful and self-seeking. It did not make a difference to Paul as long as Christ was being preached. My pastor calls this type of positive outlook, a fish dinner. When you eat a fish, you enjoy the meat, but you will encounter a few bones, so spit them out and enjoy the meal. This is a mature view and breaks down many barriers we build. This outlook has many other life applications but needs to be applied with wisdom and an understanding of the bones.

Read Philippians 1:12-30

Phil 1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

Phil 1:13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

Phil 1:14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

Phil 1:15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.

Phil 1:16 The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

Phil 1:17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

Phil 1:18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,

Phil 1:19 for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

Phil 1:20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Phil 1:22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

Phil 1:23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

Phil 1:24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Phil 1:25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,

Phil 1:26 so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

Phil 1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

Phil 1:28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.

Phil 1:29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,

Phil 1:30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Discuss

1. What statements in the reading indicate the seriousness of Paul's situation?

Paul is in chains (verses 3-4) and thinking about his death (verses 20-25).

2. What encouraged Paul to find extraordinary courage to face his imprisonment?
 - a. Philippians 1:12-13 **An opportunity to preach.**
 - b. Philippians 1:14 **Gave courage to his companions**
 - c. Philippians 1:15-18 **Motivated his opponents to preach.**
 - d. Philippians 1:19 **Encouraged by the prayers of others.**
 - e. Philippians 1:19 **Given hope from the Holy Spirit for deliverance – either freedom in death or freedom to continue to serve Christ in life.**
3. What were some of the positive results of Paul's imprisonment unintended by Jewish and Roman authorities?

1. **Paul witnessed to his guards, and even members of Caesar's household became believers (Philippians 4:22).**
2. **Others stepped up and preached the gospel in Paul's absence.**
3. **The prison letters were written: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.**

4. Verse 14 Why might others have been encouraged to preach the Gospel after Paul was imprisoned?

Paul's imprisonment boldened the Christian witness of others; it did not subdue it as Roman and Jewish leadership hoped. Perhaps others felt called because they were intimidated by Paul, but they felt compelled to take up his mantle since he was no longer present to do the preaching.

5. Verses 15-18 People other than the apostles began preaching the gospel of Christ with mixed intentions. Some were motivated by selfish ambition, and others by a love for the gospel. Why wasn't Paul too concerned about their motives? How is this different than his letter to the Galatians?

Gal 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel —

Gal 1:7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Gal 1:8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

Gal 1:9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Paul was more concerned that Christ was exalted rather than the motives and personalities of the preachers. It did not concern Paul if some preachers were motivated by selfish ambition or envy as long as their message of Christ was true. Paul's concern for the Galatians was false teaching. Paul confronted the heresy in the Galatian church forcefully because they had abandoned the gospel of salvation by God's grace through Christ for a false doctrine of Jewish legalism.

6. Paul's focus on the proclamation of Christ in verse 1:18 might go a long way to addressing some fundamental divisions in our churches.

“But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,” Philippians 1:18

How might this attitude address controversy about the following:

- a. Denominational differences
- b. Home churches with lay leaders
- c. Women pastors
- d. Communion fellowship

Discussions will vary. Move the discussion away from topics that are too divisive for your group.

My pastor has a saying, “When confronted with these types of differences, It's a bit like eating fish; we enjoy the meal but dispense with the bones.” We can enjoy the fellowship of others where Christ is preached without threatening our beliefs.

7. On what does Paul base his hope for his release from prison in verses 1:19-26?
 - a. Verse 1:20 **Paul hopes to exalt Christ**
 - b. Verse 1:22 **Paul's labor is fruitful for Christ**
 - c. Verse 1:24 **Paul would continue his ministry with the Philippians**
 - d. Verse 1:25 **The faith and joy of the Philippians would continue to grow**
8. Verses 1:20-21 are a profound statement, “I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” As you dwell on Paul's attitude, how can Christ be exalted in your body and life?

John Koessler, a Professor Emeritus at Moody Bible Institute, wrote about a friend diagnosed with terminal cancer. She wrote, “Yes, I might have incurable cancer, but I also have incurable life—I had life before cancer, I have life now with incurable cancer, and I will have life after cancer.”

We have difficulty sustaining a sense of urgency in our lives, an urgency that comes with our mortality or the hope of Christ’s return. If we could sustain the urgency, we would probably be quicker to love, more charitable and forgiving, give God thanks for being his child, and be more deliberate in our Lord’s Great Commission to reach the world with the gospel. Our mission field starts with our family, spouse, children, and grandchildren, reaching out to others in an ever-widening circle of influence. Hopefully, your life shows Christ to others, and you still have work to do, so you hope to stay with it a while longer!

9. Admittedly, I have not faced death many times, but I have seen some people in great peace as they approach their death while others are angry. How does Paul’s view of death encourage you?

While traveling overseas, I became gravely ill. As I gradually drifted into unconsciousness, I found reassurance in God’s love and complete peace, knowing I was in His hands. Thankfully, a skilled surgeon saved my life. We might fear the pain or long-suffering associated with illness, but death should hold no fear. Our view of death should be like Paul’s, who looked forward to being in Christ, either in life or death; it is the Lord’s timing.

10. What is Paul’s hope for the Philippians in verses 1:27-30?

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. (Philippians 1:27-30)

Paul expected the Philippians to undergo the same persecution he was experiencing. He wanted them to be prepared, live their lives as redeemed believers in Christ, and stand in unity, exalting Christ to those who persecuted them.

11. Which of Paul’s attitudes do you find most relevant in your situation?

- a. Purpose
- b. Joy in the face of trials
- c. Hope
- d. Perseverance
- e. Courage
- f. Discernment
- g. Encouragement

Closing Prayer