

## PHILIPPIANS BIBLE STUDY

Philippians 1:12-20

Lesson #5

### THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL

*12 Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, 13 so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, 14 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. 15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; 16 the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; 17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.*

*Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*

*Phil 1:12-20 (NASB)*

v12. Paul tells the Philippians that his present imprisonment at Rome, as unpleasant as it surely must have been for him, has actually turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. By that he is saying that regardless of his personal circumstances, the work of God in the hearts of mankind continues to make progress. Christ himself managed to save the soul of one of His companions while He was physically nailed up on a cross and beaten to near unconsciousness. Remember what Paul told Timothy?

*8 Keep in mind Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, according to my gospel. 9 For this I suffer, to the point of being bound like a criminal; but God's message is not bound. 10 This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.* 2 Tim 2:8-10 (HCSB)  
*(The elect obtain their salvation through hearing and believing the gospel message. That's God's ordained method)*

v13-14. Paul's imprisonment became a notable fact within the very midst of the imperial guard. Now how would the gospel get preached to the elect within that group unless God sovereignly placed someone there right in their midst who would share the message with them? They wouldn't dare to be seen going out to the places where Paul was preaching to hear it, so God brought it to them, by putting Paul in custody. I'm sure Paul might have thought of a plan "B" for accomplishing that task, but God is sovereign, as Paul was keenly aware, so he made use of the opportunity rather than whining about the injustice. Furthermore, he observes that the other brothers there in Rome were being encouraged to speak up more freely for the gospel by his good example. *(Discuss God's sovereign demands of His children)*

If one simply looks at the demands of God on His beloved Son, and the many martyrs of the past, then the contemporary idea of God as some kind of timid old man in heaven quickly vanishes in smoke, and one begins to understand the biblical term "the fear of God." (Rom 3:18) Paul understood self-denial and cross bearing personally.

*(Contrary to today's thinking, the call of Christ is a call to suffering and self denial, not prosperity)*

v.15-17

*15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; 16 the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; 17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.*

Question - Why bring this up now in the middle of his words of encouragement?

## **WHY DON'T WE JUST STICK TO PREACHING THE POSITIVE AND AVOID THE NEGATIVE ALTOGETHER?**

At this point Paul is compelled, or should we say inspired, to change the tone and make a comparison. When we're reading and teaching the scriptures we love the sections that are encouraging and inspiring, and we want to stay on these forever. But, the scriptures aren't written like that. From the very beginning of God's relationship with mankind in the garden of Eden, there has been the do's and there has been the don'ts. There has been the blessings and there has been the curses. When God called Israel out of Egypt He gave them two choices - obedience with blessing, or disobedience with cursing. (These were the only two options afforded by God, there wasn't a third or fourth)

God freely uses contrasts. He defines the meaning of light by showing darkness, He defines for us the meaning of righteousness by showing us the contrast of disobedience, which is called sin. He defines the meaning and immense value of His blessings by showing us the terrifying consequences of His wrath. Whether we like it or not, the scriptures teach us all the important things God wants us to know and understand by using these kinds of contrasts, and only the foolish choose to ignore them. He who has an ear carefully listens, he who does not suffers the inevitable consequences. (Ex: Lady who said she only talks about God's love and not His wrath)

If you will permit me for just a short moment to make a quick side note here I will add what I feel is a pertinent observation that relates contemporarily to this point of discussion.

It's a common thought in the churches today that we must separate our children out of the assembly when we preach on certain matters of God's wrath and judgement. Instead of including them in the teachings we take them into a separate room and have a fun and games time for them, because we're afraid to let them hear both sides of the character of God. We even do that with our adults I think. But that's not the teaching of the bible. In fact it's exactly the opposite. (Some are suggesting that telling children about God's wrath and hell is criminal child abuse!)

Remember when Israel crossed the Jordan River and defeated the city of Jericho? A young man named Achan took some of the valuable goods for himself and hid it in his tent in direct disobedience to what God had commanded. This brought God's wrath on the whole nation of Israel and they were defeated by a small force at the next city. Afterwards God revealed who it was that had sinned and told the people to destroy him and all his possessions, as well as his whole family.

Immediately after that situation, Joshua assembled all the people of Israel and this is what He did:

*34 Afterwards, Joshua read aloud all the words of the law—the blessings as well as the curses—according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read before the entire assembly of Israel, including the women, little children, and foreigners who were with them.*

Josh 8:34-35 (HCSB)

### **Now Getting Back On Point**

I've said all this to prepare us for Paul's next statement; that while many were encouraged to preach the gospel without fear, nevertheless, not all of them were doing it for right and Godly motives. Now wait a minute, is Paul saying that there was a preaching of the gospel taking place that was not inspired by God, but rather was a product of selfish human motivations? **Yes, that is exactly what Paul was saying,** under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as well as his own personal observations.

Right there in the same geographic regions, and in the same lifetime as Christ's appearing, there were already imposters playing on His gospel message for their own selfish purposes. As tragic as this is, it's something that we really need to know, isn't it? Paul could have left that out and just concentrated on the advancement of the gospel and the happy and positive things going on, but that isn't the way the scriptures are written.

The bible is a book of contrasts. After every encouragement and blessing there is a warning. At the end of every gospel presentation there is an ultimatum - believe or perish. At every crossroad, there is a right way and a wrong way. After every instruction from God there is the consequences of disobedience clearly described. (Lev 26:14-46)

(God has a wonderful plan for your life - Or, He has Hell planned for your life if you reject Him)

Not everyone preaching the gospel in Paul's day was doing it for Godly purposes, so we shouldn't be surprised that there are so many strange and bizarre preachers out there today with every kind of preaching imaginable? It's been like that from the beginning of time. From the time of Adam and Eve, it has been about believing God and doing what He

says, or believing someone else's deceptions and ignoring God's commands. Today there is a custom tailored gospel for every conceivable personal preference, just shop around a little and you'll find one you like.

These were, and still are, a dangerous and sinister type. Those who **do** preach the gospel, but for their own personal gain, **with no fear of God in doing so**, and sadly there are still many such peddlers with us today. If they really believed in the God they preach, they would be afraid to do what they're doing, both with His name and with His scriptures. An absence of any fear of disobeying God is a reliable indicator of the absence of true belief in God. Those who preach or teach God's word, while themselves knowingly disobeying it, expose themselves as imposters and unbelievers.

(Ex: Female Preachers, Homosexual advocates, Fake evangelists, healers and deliverance preachers... etc.)

#### V.18

***18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,***

Why in the world would Paul say this? He's just said that false teachers were perverting the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and intentionally causing him personal trouble, but nevertheless he's going to rejoice. Was Paul's incarceration affecting his mind? Was he losing his senses?

No, not at all. In fact, here is where Paul shows his immense spiritual maturity and depth of understanding of God's overall sovereign control. He says essentially, **"so what,"** either way God is getting His predestined work accomplished, both by His elect followers **and** by those who are self seeking. Paul understands what very few Christians ever seem to come to realize, that God is making **all things** work out to the accomplishment of His eternal plan. He used Peter and John, **and** He used Judas Iscariot and Herod. Both of these groups were essential predetermined pieces of the master plan. He used Moses, and He used Pharaoh. He used Daniel, and He used Nebachadnezzar. All by design.

To this very day He is using Jesus His Son, **and** He is using Satan His enemy, all to accomplish His eternal and perfect predetermined plan for the creation **and preparation** of an eternal family of worshipers and companions for Himself. He calls this group His kingdom and His bride, and His elect, and He has known them and recorded their names in His Book of Life from before creation. (Eph 1:4-5; Rev 13:8, 17:8) Everything God ever made has its purpose, nothing is wasted, and **nothing has gone wrong with His plan**, or disrupted its implementation one wit, nor ever will. Do you really understand this? Remember God's declaration to His people through the prophet Isaiah?

(*The Sovereignty of God by Arthur W. Pink*)

*9 "Remember the former things long past,  
For I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is no one like Me,  
10 Declaring the end from the beginning,  
And from ancient times things which have not [yet] been done,  
Saying, 'My purpose will be established,  
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';  
11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, (Referring to the Babylonians)  
The man of My purpose from a far country. (Referring to Nebachadnezzar)  
Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass.  
I have planned it, surely I will do it.*

Isaiah 46:9-11 (NASB)

This declaration was part of a severe warning that Isaiah was issuing to Judah by the command of God, but history shows that those who don't really believe in God, have no fear of the warnings. Indeed, why would they? They find such warnings either repugnant and offensive, or just plain silly and childish. The fact is, if they really believed in God they probably wouldn't need the warnings in the first place. No one who doesn't believe in God will feel obliged to obey Him.

But nevertheless, just like Paul, those who are mature can confidently say **"so what"** even in this God is getting His way and working out His predetermined plan for the extraordinary good of His elect, and the unimaginable peril of His enemies. And in all this, we who are His can rejoice, yes and we should rejoice, because either way, **the necessary work is getting done**, and God's plan for His own is advancing ever onward to that day we are all anticipating, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. (Tit 2:13)

And then everything will be made clear to all. Every creature will either joyously or dreadfully declare that **God is absolutely sovereign** and **Jesus alone is Lord.** Amen, come quickly Lord Jesus.

When the mob came to arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword and was prepared to fight, but Jesus stopped him and said that it was of no use to resist, because everything coming upon Him was necessary and had been predetermined by the express will of God, and recorded in the Holy Scriptures. As horrible as it would be, it had to happen to fulfill God's eternal predetermined plan. And so are the painful events of our day necessary to fulfill the end times prophecies of scriptures. The unbelieving world in general will become more and more hostile and merciless as described in 2 Timothy chapter 3, and even the **churches will cease to accept sound doctrine** and replace it with entertaining nonsense. (2Tim4:3)

The painful rejection of God by the world, and the church, and by our own beloved country, are all part of the express plan of God in the working out of His eternal plan. And so it is recorded in the Holy Scriptures. **But just like Jesus, we must understand that our kingdom is not of this realm.** Our hope and our joy is thoroughly vested in that coming eternal kingdom that awaits, so we rejoice even in our adversities, as in them we see that glorious day drawing closer and closer as the scriptures are being fulfilled before our very eyes. If the apostasy of the world and church *must* precede the Lord's glorious kingdom, then by all means let them come, as painful and distasteful as they surely will be. Of course, this doesn't mean we participate in them, but that we openly condemn them and expose them for what they are. And the price we'll have to pay for doing so will continue to escalate daily.

### **v19-20**

***19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.***

Now Paul moves on to show us his personal feelings and reveals to us his perspective on life. He says that he knows that the situation will turn out for his deliverance through their prayers and the provisions of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. He can remain encouraged because he knows that he's under God's sovereign control and whatever happens will turn out for the greater good of God's people and the advancement of God's kingdom.

From his perspective, he only desires that he himself remains faithful to his calling as a apostle of Jesus Christ, and that everything that he says and does, even under circumstances of duress, is still to Christ's glory and honor. Because, any failure or breakdown on his part will directly reflect on Christ Himself, so Paul's concern is that he will not do anything whatsoever that would put either Christ Himself or His message to shame, as long as he is alive in his earthly flesh and blood body. Paul's first concern was not for his release or his own welfare, but for the honor of the name of Jesus Christ and the gospel message He proclaimed.

Furthermore, he goes on to freely acknowledge that his perspective of "deliverance" from the situation of his imprisonment and possible execution could involve either his release or his death. Either way, Paul says he only desires that he would honor Christ, either by his life or by his death.

Such a perspective on life is only possible if one is entirely God centered. If our thinking and our aspirations are centered on our own prosperity and our own well being, or even the earthly prosperity and well being of other people, then it will be impossible to know the mind set of Paul as he was awaiting a decision of life or death to be rendered upon him any day. Paul had no possessions to safeguard. He seemed to have no home, no wife or family is mentioned, no property or goods to keep safe, just the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and his commission to teach it to that deliberately chosen small and unimpressive remnant of receptive Jews and Gentiles as long as he lived. (1Cor 1:18-31)

Certainly we are not all called to be apostles. We are not all called to vows of poverty or chastity as Paul seemed to be. In fact, Peter was married, and he did have a family, and a business, and a home, yet he left it all to follow Jesus Christ's command to teach the same truth's he had received from Christ to all the peoples of the earth who had an ear to hear. While at the same time not defiling it by freely and intentionally presenting it before the swine and dogs of the earth, who held it in obvious contempt. (Mat 7:6) **(Homosexual rallies, satanic rituals, false religions)**

Again, we aren't all called to leave our families and jobs and possessions to go out and preach the gospel, but the attitude and willingness to do so, if called, is an absolute necessity to everyone who thinks themselves to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. (Mat 16:24-26; Luk 9:23-24; Luk 14:26-27)

For the vast majority of us today, the calling of Jesus Christ is to deny the promiscuous ways of our current society, and the desires for wealth, and the fleshly indulgences of sin, and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age. (Tit 2:12) Doing so is the way that we give glory to God and Jesus our Lord, as Paul had just written in verses 10 & 11, and is a very small price to pay for the rewards offered to those who do so.

At the same time we are being sanctified and matured to take our place at His side when the time comes. We must not let the enticements of the world steal our affections and divert our attentions away from our mission and our calling **to be conformed to His image**, (Rom 8:29; Eph 4:13) lest we find ourselves ill-prepared for His arrival, and all our worldly works and efforts, as well as many of our potential rewards, go up in smoke at His judgement seat. (1Cor 3:10-15)

We must make propitious use of the time we have in this life to learn everything we can about Him and His purpose for us by holy living and serious study of scriptures. We must be able to discern the truth from error, the real from the counterfeit, God's purposes from Satan's purposes, or we are of little use for the work of ministry in this age or the administration of His eternal kingdom in the coming age.

The purpose of God in the creation of all things is the display of His glory, not the redemption of mankind. It is our mission to become prepared to take our place in that creation as the unique creatures to whom He has directed His glory and to whom He has most clearly revealed it. To fulfill our function we must come to the greatest possible knowledge of Him. We were created in His likeness so that we could become capable of understanding Him and comprehending the magnitude of His glory. The scriptures say that angels seek to understand these things, but it seems that man is mostly interested in himself.

But, God has kept a remnant for Himself, who love Him with all their heart and soul, with all their strength, and it will be these faithful few who will come to see His glory and share in His kingdom. The others, of every religious persuasion, including liberal Christianity, will hear those horrifying words, "depart from Me, I never knew you."

So, if you're one of those who love Him, and diligently seek after Him, and hunger and thirst for His word and His righteousness, who delight in obedience to His commands whatever the cost, then rejoice my brother and sister, for God has determined before creation to give you the kingdom, along with Himself, forever and ever.

You may ask, how do I know if I really love Him. I think I love Him. I always say I do. The bible gives one true and accurate way to answer this question. If you love Him you will obey Him, it's that simple. Your heart will delight in the scriptures because they are the means He has given us to understand how to obey and please Him. If you do not desire His word, and take no interest in learning and obeying it, then there is no reason to believe that your love is genuine and your faith is true. Genuine saving faith, given as the gift of God, includes as an integral part, a new heart that loves and desires intimate knowledge and perfect obedience. (Jer 31; Eze 36)

### **CONCLUSION:**

In these passages Paul has encouraged us by reminding us that God's work is going on precisely as planned, but at the same time he is warning us that not all those who preach the gospel and teach the scriptures are true and honest, so we must remain vigilant, we must examine everything carefully (1Th 5:21-22) and weigh it against scriptures; and then most of all, we must seek to honor God in the way that we live our lives, regardless of the circumstances or methods that He has ordained for us to live and serve.

### **Additional Note:**

It is interesting to note that Paul got to do that for which he expressed the desire in these passages, (to honor Christ) in both of the ways that he mentions in verse 20. Once he was released and returned to honor Christ by his ministry to the churches, and then later he was arrested again and honored his Master and Savior by his death at the hands of the executioner.

So, Paul honored his Savior by his life, and he honored his Savior by his death, **and now he is with Him in His presence**, waiting for the rest of God's elect to come to repentance and the knowledge of the truth, (2Pet 3:9; Rom 11:25) and that long anticipated trumpet blast (1Co 15:51-53) calling us into his glorious and everlasting presence, (1Th 4:13-18) where we will worship Him, and enjoy Him, and serve Him in the co-administration of His eternal kingdom, forever and ever and ever. For this is the immutable, omnipotent, predestined, master plan of God for the creation of all the things that He has ever made to manifest His glory.

Amen.

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