

Philippians 1:12-19

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[0 : 00] Open up your Bibles to Philippians. So again, it's me up here. College students, sorry.

You might get a break from me this week I believe our third week in Philippians.

And Paul is writing from Rome and he is under, well, he's in prison. But we, as I said last week, if you want to go back and get some of the background of Philippians, you can go listen to the previous message.

But more than likely he was under some form, hey, he was under some form of house arrest or as a Roman citizen had, you know, somewhat comfortable quarters at the time.

Now, he had much more severe imprisonments later and in other places. And, but if you read the end of the book of Acts, we see that when Paul came to Rome, he actually was able to preach the gospel unhindered.

[1 : 20] And it says he welcomed all who came to his quarters and spent time with them. And while he was awaiting trial from Caesar, which we probably think did not happen, but he was, he seemed confident even in the book of Philippians about being released.

And he talks about even another missionary journey. And so we're confident that he was released from this particular imprisonment. So today, I guess if we had a title for the message, it would be the advancement of the gospel.

And just by way of introduction, obviously, let's just read our text together. We'll be in chapter 1.

And we're going to start in verse 12. And he says, Paul, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

And most of all, most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some, indeed, preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill.

The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

[2 : 59] What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed and in that I rejoice. Yes, I will rejoice.

For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance. So, we'll stop there.

We could get into verse 20, but I could just camp on verse 20 forever. So we'll just save it for next week and tie it in to next week. But for introduction's sake, just look at verse 12.

He says, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. And things hadn't quite turned out for Paul as he wanted.

He thought that he actually was going to get some really great public trial, hopefully before Caesar, because he had appealed to Caesar, which would have been the whack job Nero, but he probably did not actually hear him, in which case some other officials would have heard him.

[4 : 08] And he says, though, that his imprisonment in Rome hasn't hindered the advancement of the gospel, but rather is served as a progression of the gospel.

And God had chosen to use his arrest to spread the news of Christ to many of the elites in Rome. So the main focus of the message today is that the gospel will go forth no matter what, and it will advance from every place where it is preached.

No matter what circumstance, I guess, you find yourself in, we are to be proclaiming Christ to a lost and dying world around us. So, the Greek word advancement is a metaphor for pioneers who are cutting away before an army and to further its march.

So I will, I spared you a lot of history last week, I might not spare you this week. So, other than my good friend Parker Kleindeek, who I can now talk about history with, and someone else who enjoys it, most people get bored.

But, one of the most remarkable advancements in history, I believe, was around 200 B.C. So imagine being in 200 B.C., and I said, I want you to organize an army from several different nations, most of which that don't really like each other.

[5 : 33] I want you to train them. I want you to march a thousand miles over rugged wilderness. I want you to cross or forge large rivers, defeat any native peoples that might harass you along the way, keep moving, cross the Alps in freezing, cold, winter weather, go down into Italy, and then defeat 10 Roman legions, roughly 70,000 men, some of the best trained, the best trained army in the ancient world.

Would anybody want that job? That just sounds awful. Let it actually happen. That advancement, which is what he's talking about here, the same kind of word, happened by Hannibal in his Carthaginian army.

Military historians at West Point and every other in North Georgia, hopefully, if not, then we're going downhill. We've got to talk about this. they study this advancement, this movement of Hannibal's army into Rome.

He had declared war on them. They had harassed him and his people for centuries. And around 22 BC, he came to power.

And he had an army of about 38,000 infantry, 8,000 cavalry, and 37 war elephants. Made up from a lot of different nations, but they united together to fight against Rome, spoke different languages.

[6 : 56] He had to cross a lot of rivers to feed a lot of different barbaric peoples along the way. And he marched through the Alps in the middle of winter, which most Romans thought was impossible.

And he actually cut through the mountains, like broke through the rock, and made a way to go down in it. And so, he finally got down into Italy where a huge, one of the largest Roman armies ever assembled.

70,000 men were waiting for him, about 10 Roman legions, and he defeated them. Almost killed them to the man. It was one of the worst military defeats in Roman history.

But, people studied that crazy march, like how in the world did he do it under such circumstances.

And, but I say that because both of those advancements, both of Carthage and Rome, are over.

Period. They don't, they're not around today. But Paul is using that same word that you would talk about for some sort of military advancement to describe how his advancement, the advancement of the gospel, has not been stopped.

[8 : 10] It hasn't been prevented. It hadn't been thwarted. And, remember, it has gone out through, to every nation, nation to nation, across oceans, to many different people's groups, from persecutions.

people have tried to destroy the word of God. People have tried to destroy the gospel and his missionaries, his people. We're still here.

And, it's still going forward even today, many, many, many years later. So, God has promised that no power, earthly or spiritual, is going to stop the advancement of the gospel.

And, I love Isaiah 40, which we studied a few weeks ago, where it foretells of this advancement, right, that later, John the Baptist spoke of.

But a voice cries in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley will be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low.

[9 : 18] And the uneven ground become level and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

And so, it's coming. Like he said, it's here when John the Baptist said that in the person of Christ.

So, today, we're going to talk about four different ways that the gospel affects those who share it.

How the gospel affects us. So, don't get comfortable. But number one, these are talking about our text, sharing the gospel affects your soul.

Sharing the gospel affects your soul. Paul recognized that his imprisonment released the power of the gospel, but even his imprisonment did not bind the gospel.

He knew that God had brought him there, so he didn't complain. He kind of just accepted it as it was, accepted the present circumstances and allowed God to use him where he was.

[10:23] So, in 2 Timothy chapter 2, this was his last imprisonment, by the way, when he wrote 2 Timothy, so more than likely his last imprisonment before he was executed.

But he wrote to Timothy saying, remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal.

But, the word of God is not bound. Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

and I hope and pray that we can somehow be challenged by those words, I endure everything, so that they can actually hear the gospel, so that we may obtain salvation.

And even though he recognizes that he's chained, like he's saying, the gospel is not chained, the word of God is not chained, it's going forward. And, God will allow us to go through many, many hardships in order to share the gospel with other people.

[11:49] So, I would even, you know, say, God will even allow death to even happen to one of his own children if it means bring salvation to other people.

If you don't think that God would allow suffering to come upon his own for the sake of others being saved, then we have to just go back to the cross because he allowed his son to suffer the worst kind of death so that we might step into salvation and eternal life.

Christ is committed to saving his people no matter what. And he went into the most dreadful place so that we could be saved.

In John 6, this is telling you his commitment, John 6, verse 37, he says, all that the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day.

[13:04] all that he has come to save will be saved. And we can be a part of that. It's a mission that's going to happen. And he's chosen to use us as his instruments, his messengers.

So, one of the ways, again, that the gospel affects your own soul is that this is the most basic, easy thing, guys. we glorify and we praise what we love the most.

Some of you don't like to talk about stuff like this but you could talk all day about something else.

And what we talk about, what we do with our time, what we read about, how we spend our money, it reflects what we really love.

And we praise the things, again, that we love the most and we have to express that out loud a lot of the time. So, before his conversion, C.S. Lewis wondered why the Bible was filled with the term praise a lot.

He said it sounded like an old woman wanting compliments at first. But then, this is where he wrote, I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment.

[14:21] And that is it. Like, we can't just not talk about it. And it says in Psalm 34, I will bless the Lord at all times and his praise should be continually in my mouth.

My soul must boast in the Lord. I magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together. His name will be on our lips at all times.

And so, as a child of God, we should love expressing that to other people. We have the privilege, again, of being his messengers. And, again, it's as easy as remembering that your affections in Christ will compel you to talk about Christ with other people.

We can't be silent. So, the joy of Christ has to kind of break out somehow. God is putting his joy into you and it has to come out or else it will be kind of like the Dead Sea where everything goes in but nothing comes out.

And so, that's one of the most basic ways. And if we don't have any desire to talk about it, then there's something wrong in our affections. So, number two, just to kind of move on, we're going to cover some more of this.

[15:39] Number two, sharing the gospel affects lost souls. See this in verse 13. He says, So, it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

So, again, his imprisonment was kind of becoming well known. People were finding out who he was and why he was there. So, the imperial guard really is the praetorian guard, the elite guard of the Roman emperor, stationed at the palace to guard the emperor and etc.

and important other places in Rome. Paul knew the influence that those men could have for the gospel and so, somehow, the chain reaction, right, it was going to the imperial guard.

It was reaching the palace itself, right? And after that time, they began, many people in the household of Caesar were coming to know the name of Christ.

And just think about it though, he didn't say, like, Lord, why am I chained up here? Like, this is, I could do so much more if I was just released. It was more of like, you know, the guards that are hanging out with Paul and he's, so what are you in for, bro?

[17:00] Well, let me tell you, because you can't go anywhere and I'm stuck with you. So, I love sharing the gospel with people on airplanes because they're stuck with you. They can't go anywhere. So, until eventually they put their headphones on or something, you're like, no problem.

But yeah, but it's as easy as it was spreading and it was affecting many people in the city of Rome, including the elite Praetorian guard. And so, we should feel brokenness in our soul for the lost. lost. We once were in that place ourselves. Many of you, not that long ago, you remember what it was like to walk in darkness.

And God has chosen, again, to use us to be the ones to bring a message to them that's going to set their souls free. And I love hearing about, and I hope any of us do, about how God has saved someone and changed them and given them new life in Christ.

And so, we should be broken for their souls. Thirdly, excuse me, this is number three. Sharing the gospel affects fellow believers.

[18:17] So, it affects our souls, it affects lost souls, and sharing the gospel affects fellow believers. He says this in verse 14. He says that most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

So, he says that they're emboldened by his imprisonment. I don't know what it is, but I'm sure there's some sort of social or psychological term for this.

But when I hear stories like this, I get, I'm challenged. I'm like, man, what excuse do I have if this is happening in places like prisons where people have endured great persecutions even today, like, what is my excuse?

I'm challenged by that. I'm incited by that. But there are some people today that are kind of like, well, that just makes me feel even worse because I don't have any excuse.

And I feel, and they just use it to continue driving themselves down. And, but, but just check this out though, what God means for stuff like this to be encouraging to us.

[19:30] He means for it to be challenging to us. So Paul is saying that my imprisonment has furthered these things. And so I love hearing just, you know, wartime stories from both here in the U.S.

and overseas. Men and women that are sharing Christ in very dangerous and difficult situations.

And, again, I rejoice when I hear of people coming to Christ and being delivered from sin.

One of my, one of my best friends, he went to North Georgia many years ago, but he and his wife are in, in a very strong, influential Muslim country right now.

And, and all day like just preaching Christ, making disciples in that context. And I, I'm challenged by that. I'm not discouraged by that.

I'm not like, well, I'm just worthless because I'm not doing anything. I'm like, I'm like, no, God means for this to challenge us. So, what I want you to do this week, I'm just going to give you a challenge.

[20:37] Meet with or call a person that God has used to bring you to faith in Jesus Christ.

Someone who shared the gospel with you, someone who was patient with you, someone who took the time to show you the love of Christ.

They were, you know, to you, they were like a picture of the gospel made visible. And thank them for sharing it with you. It could be your parents, it could be a friend, it could be someone else that you know elsewhere.

But just thank them and ask them why they did it too. and see if that affects your soul. Number four, sharing the gospel affects opponents.

Sharing the gospel affects opponents. See this in verses 15 through 18. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry but others from goodwill. The latter do it out of love knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry or selfish ambition. not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way whether in pretense or in truth Christ is

proclaimed and in that I rejoice.

[21 : 55] Jesus warned that one of the biggest opponents of the gospel was not necessarily going to be outside forces but eventually it was going to be inside forces. And that's why Paul spent so much time dealing with Jewish sects, pagan establishments, false teachers that were trying to pollute the gospel.

And here he mentions that hostility coming from so-called leaders in the church. And so that's one of the most discouraging things is when other people they're supposed to be like alongside you, fighting alongside you, become, they attack you and slander you.

And so, but in a lot of ways here, it seems to be not necessarily that their doctrine or their theology was off, but that their motives were off. They had bad motives for what they were doing.

It says in verse 15, he uses the word envy, which means to deprive someone of what is rightfully theirs so that they wish they had it and you didn't.

And so, you see the word strife also, really. Strife means enmity caused by jealousy, wanting something another possesses.

[23 : 12] And Paul is trying to say that a lot of these people are preaching this to hurt me. They have bad motives, selfish ambition, not out of sincere love for the gospel, but they wanted to somehow dismantle Paul's reputation, discredit his work, and they had some personal issue with him, and they even looked at his imprisonment as a sign that God was not pleased with him.

You see, he's in prison right now. I'm challenged all of you to some point, do a good in-depth study of 2 Corinthians, and you'll learn a lot about Paul that you might not have ever thought about him before.

But one of those things was he didn't just look like a successful guy. He wasn't physically impressive, he wasn't a great public speaker, he didn't have a ton of money and stuff, and he had poor speaking abilities, right?

But God chose instead to still work through him and use him, but many people just didn't think he was worth it. So they were preaching the same gospel message in a way, but doing it to inflict harm on Paul.

But Paul had enough security in the Lord, confidence in the Lord, to be like, you know what? If they make fun of me and give me bull, that's okay, because as long as the gospel is going forth, that's all I really care about.

[24 : 37] And in that, I will rejoice. So we need to ask ourselves, you know, as well, why would we proclaim Christ? Not to compete with one another or other churches, and you should hear some of the other pastors and churches out here that we just have to talk to sometimes.

A lot of them are great ones, but a lot of them are, you can just tell, it's like a competition. Who's got the biggest this and the biggest that, and how many people are showing up, and how many programs, and it is disgusting at times.

So, some application for this, because I'm running out of time. What excuses do we make for not advancing the gospel?

Number one is circumstances. We just say, well, we don't have the time. If I was just in a different stage of life, or if I was in a different job, or I didn't have as many responsibilities as I did, this is probably the biggest one for me at the moment, because I guess when I was single, I could kind of run rogue a lot more, like all hours of the day and night doing things.

But we say things even like, you ever heard this, I'm just waiting for God to open the door. Well, that's partially biblical.

[25 : 57] Out of Colossians 4, Paul says he's praying that God may open a door for them to share the word. But, what it usually means, usually, you could mean that in a good way, but what it usually means I'm waiting until it's easy, until it's convenient, until it's safe, and then I'm going to share the gospel.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians another similar way of opening the door, that it doesn't always mean easy or no resistance. He said, I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost for a wide door for effective work has opened to me.

Cool, a door of ministry has opened to him. He says, but there are many adversaries. So, not convenient door to go through. He goes through that door to preach the gospel, there's going to be a lot of hostility.

And so, some of us need to quit waiting for that, some of us need to try to kick down doors, beat down doors. It'll open if God wants it to open, but we need to take the initiative by faith. Secondly, some people don't advance the gospel out of fear. Okay? I'm afraid, but it really comes down to is because we're not ever, at least for now, going to be in prison for sharing our faith, are beaten up, more than likely.

[27 : 22] Some people might have wanted to kill me before, but I wouldn't know that. But fear really means I'm afraid of what they will think about me. I don't want to upset them.

I don't want them to stop being my friend. And underneath that, very subtly, very subtly, is the hidden idolatry of pride.

You want to be liked. You want to be accepted by people. And we feel like we have to warm up to people for years at a time before we actually share the gospel with them because we might scare them away.

Just quit hiding behind that excuse. The real quick biblical answer to that is fear God, not man. So, thirdly, I know I'm out of time, but oh well, not knowledgeable enough.

Not knowledgeable enough. I don't know enough. Like what if they ask me something I don't know? Well, if you know the gospel, then you know enough to share. If you have believed the gospel, there's no way you've forgotten what you have believed in.

[28 : 25] And the disciples weren't big brains, they weren't big theology degrees, they didn't have all that, they weren't master apologists, they were ordinary, common guys. They were quick-tempered, a lot of them, but listen to what it says in Acts 13 about Peter and John.

It says, now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they perceived that they were uneducated, common men, and they were astonished, and they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

So remember, it's about who they know. They had been with Christ. That was it. So the closer we get to Christ, the more we know about him, the more we will be able to talk about him.

So all that's really needed is just a willing heart. You don't have to know everything. You have to be able to communicate the gospel. I know a lot of people who aren't great communicators, and I know that a lot of them are just afraid even.

They feel insufficient. I know one guy named Jonathan, one of my best friends. He's led people to Christ before, and he is not anything like what you would think somebody would be as an evangelist.

[29 : 47] Fourthly, I don't really hear this one too much, but I have heard it. It's not my gift. I don't have the spiritual gift of evangelism. I'll just leave that to the professionals or those who do. And it's only true, that is only true in the sense that God has gifted some people just a little bit better of an ability to communicate gospel truth, to articulate the gospel message.

But it doesn't excuse anyone from sharing the message in what capacity God has given them. Understand that? And I mean, would we really pass over someone in need of Christ just because it's not your spiritual gift?

We can't live that way. The gifts have a place, but don't use them as an excuse. It would be like me or Nathan saying, well, we're too high and mighty to wash dishes, or we're too high and mighty to help set up chairs, or do anything else.

It doesn't make any sense at all. Again, oddly enough, God picks a lot of people in Scripture who don't seem to be great communicators publicly, Paul included. So, another one you could probably throw out there is my own sin.

I'm not good enough. I'm such a terrible person. I'm a terrible follower of Jesus, and I'm bogged down by my own sin. God can't share it with somebody else.

[31 : 08] Well, if that's the truth, if that's your demeanor all the time, then there's something missing in your belief and connection to the gospel itself.

It should liberate you. And sometimes, even sharing it with someone else reignites the joy of it in my own soul. So, don't hide behind that either.

Satan would love to bog you down so that you don't share with other people, but live in the freedom that Christ has won for you. So, as one missionary said, sympathy is no substitute for action.

So, there are many people, I guess we just want to feel bad for them, we want to pity them, our friends, our family, but we need to begin praying and being very intentional about living the gospel in front of them and sharing it with them, not one or the other.

So, what about you? I mean, where are you in this process? And, God will put people in your path, but you can also go out and find them.

[32 : 18] We need to hunt them down, take initiative, take that the right way, hunt them down. But, yeah, there's, one thing I wanted to share this morning is, the only way I could really relate to Paul is a lot of my hospital stays over the year, which is, again, nothing like he endured, but there was one time I missed out on a great ministry opportunity because I got sick and I had to go to the hospital.

I was super bummed. I was in Atlanta at the cystic fibrosis center, and I must have been sitting there watching Lord the rings or a baseball game or something, but my doctor came in and said, hey, there's another patient here who was just really afraid of needles and getting an IV or a PICC line.

Could you go talk to them and tell them, you know, kind of calm them down? And I thought, you want me to tell them? Tom is not going to hurt? So, that's lying.

So, anyway, it was a girl, her name was Jade, and here's what's crazy, she was from Dahlonaga, and met her for the first time.

She was definitely just afraid of being in the hospital. She hadn't had to be hospitalized too much to that point. But I began just talking to her and getting to know her, and she was afraid of dying.

[33 : 41] She was afraid of what the disease was going to do to her, because all of a sudden she had been living a pretty normal life, but then all of a sudden things were just getting worse, like with her cystic fibrosis.

So, while I was there, I continued just to, she's like, how do you deal with it? How do you face this? And I said, I can't face it. I mean, but I have a hope that is not of this world, and I began just unpacking the gospel to her and trying to do it in a very understanding, compassionate way. And by the end of the week, she told me she wanted to become a follower of Christ, and told me that when she came back to Delonaga, she was going to continue to follow Christ. And I just told her, no promises.

I can't promise that Jesus is going to make your life easier, that he's going to heal you of your CF, but no matter what, you're going to follow him, right? And she's like, yes.

And she did. She came back and was a part of a church here in Delonaga. A few years later, she passed away, which just really kind of caught me off guard.

[34 : 57] God will use you. He'll use you to reach other people. Just stop. Snap out of this like I'm here at church and someone else is telling me to share the gospel.

Like, just stop. And see the great privilege we have as messengers of Christ. And see that people need Christ.

That we can, by his power and by his grace, be the one to talk about our Savior. So, yeah, let's pray together and let's rejoice that the gospel is going to go forward with or without us.

And I hope that we will be a part of it.