

Scripture: Philippians 1:12-18

Notes: Paul wrote this letter from a Roman prison to encourage people not to give up. He wanted them to work together so the truth about Jesus would spread around the world. Christianity was in its infancy during this time and Satan was using all tools at his disposal to kill the faith. He used the Roman oppressors and religion to discourage folks from believing the truth. *Paul wrote the prison epistles while he was in jail.* Paul may not have realized the importance of his writing, but if he had not been put into prison, we would not have the Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon. Just consider how many folks have been impacted for Christ as a result of these epistles. God is always on the throne.

I. God used Paul's imprisonment to spread the Gospel. (12-14) Folks were concerned that God was finished using Paul. He told them nothing could be further from the truth. God was using his imprisonment to further the Gospel in ways the church at Philippi did not see.

1. Paul had the opportunity to share Christ with Roman prison guards. (12-13) *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places* Roman prisoners were chained to guards giving Paul the opportunity to witness to folks who otherwise would never would have heard the Gospel. The gospel is being spread in Rome.

2. Paul's courage and imprisonment convinced other believers they needed to spread the gospel. (14) *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* There could have been believers who were hesitant about proclaiming the gospel because the Apostle Paul was doing such a great job. In other words evangelism should only be done by the professionals. Once he was imprisoned the thought process would change someone needs to tell others; why not me. Another way it could have given more boldness was their ability to see how God was still using Paul in the midst of his persecution. This would give them courage to speak the word understanding God was on the throne. It has always been a principle that the church grows and thrives in the midst of persecution. It is because folks living under persecution realize they need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to work for God. **Romans 1:16** *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* Paul knew that his message was the greatest news the world had ever known. God had intervened in the affairs of man and provided a Savior. Belief in or faith in this news was the way for anybody to receive eternal life. The power to change lives begins when we believe the truth about Jesus. **John 1:12** *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name* When I receive the Son I become a son. As a son I receive the Holy Spirit who confirms within my mind the presence of God in my life, a guide in my understanding of the Bible, and is discerner of spiritual truths.

II. Paul taught that God could bless his word however it was preached. (15-18) As I was studying this passage I discovered there were different views on what Paul meant in these verses. Dr. Gurzke thought it meant non-believers arguing against Christ actually caused folks to study to see if they were right. Some saw it as a picture of the ecumenical movement and how evangelicals dismiss their ministries because of the sign gifts like speaking in tongues. One commentator's believed it was the Judaizes Paul was talking about while Dr. Walvord was positive they were not talking about the Judaizes.

1. Some preached with envy causing strife. *Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife;..... The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:* These preachers were jealous of Paul probably because he had a greater following they did. They had forgotten that preaching

needs to point folks to Jesus not to the preacher. **Dr. Walvord writes:** *They purposely wanted to stir up trouble for Paul while he was in bondage. ..it seems that they were believers who for some unknown reason did not love the apostle or appreciate his work. Though they were doctrinally sound, they promoted themselves.* I agree with that except I'm not sure they were doctrinally sound. No doubt there was a personal attack on Paul and his ministry. It is obvious to Paul that they are trying to hurt him. It seems that they want to be the most influential preacher. They may have been telling folks Paul was in prison because he is being judged by God. One type of preaching that disturbs me is when the preacher spends most of his time attacking other churches. I'm not talking about issues where we need to contend for the faith; issues like the inerrancy of scripture; salvation through faith alone; Christ alone. I am talking about a holier than thou attitude; it gives the impression that I'm super saint and you aint. There is an arrogance in their personalities that drives away the lost and discourages folks who are young in the faith.

2. There are those who are continuing to preach the gospel as they were taught by Paul. some also of good will:.... But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. The people Paul is referring to here are people who are like minded with Paul. Their goal is to see that correct doctrine is taught, people are saved and saved folks continue to grow in the knowledge of the Lord. This would bring great joy to Paul's heart. This reminds of Paul's command in **2 Timothy 4:2-5** **Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.** This is a command to preach the Bible because the time will come when people don't want to hear it. They will find someone who will tell them what they want to hear and that what they are doing is acceptable even if it violates God's word. The work of the evangelist is go into the highways and byways and bring them in.

3. The key is when the Gospel is preached God will honor His word. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. Isaiah 55:11 **So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: It shall not return unto me void, But it shall accomplish that which I please, And it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.** Paul is saying that it is the Word that God blesses not the messenger. When I think of these verses I consider many of my brothers and sisters in Christ who go to other churches who are saved. Some of them are Presbyterians; some are Methodist, Baptist, Southern Baptist, Episcopalian, Independent, Charismatic and even some Catholics. When I hear folks are getting saved in those churches I say praise the Lord and so would Paul. Our business is to make sure our fellowship with Christ is real; not look at others churches to see where they might be wrong.