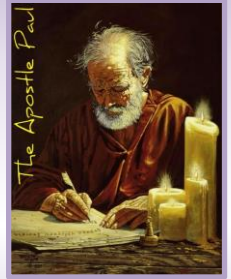


PHILIPPIANS

Joy In Christ

Lesson 03: Opportunity of Obstacles ... [PHILIPPIANS 1:12-19]



PREVIEW

Paul's imprisonment caused him to be known among the elite Praetorian Guard, and it also emboldened many Christians to speak out for the word of God. Unfortunately, some believers shared the gospel out of envy and strife, thinking to cause Paul stress while he was in prison. Despite such selfish motives, Paul was still glad to see the proclamation of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL: (1:12-14)

THINGS WILL HAPPEN TO A BELIEVER (12A)

Paul wants the Philippian believers to understand a fundamental principle in the will of God and to remember it always ("I WANT YOU TO KNOW"). .

What happened to Paul since he had last seen the Philippians ("THE THINGS WHICH HAPPENED TO ME")? Although Paul did not itemize the obstacles in this letter, he did discuss them elsewhere (2 Corinthians 11:23-27). Luke recorded the historical background of that period of the apostle's life (Acts 20:6-28:31).

Through all the things which happened to Paul and, still imprisoned, still chained, still unheard, still uncertain, Paul looks back and declares "THE THINGS WHICH HAPPENED TO ME HAVE ACTUALLY TURNED OUT FOR THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL".

THINGS CAN ADVANCE THE GOSPEL (12B)

To Paul, opportunity was on the other side of the obstacle. When believers view adverse circumstances from the divine (eternal) perspective, they will use them for spiritual advantage ("FOR THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL"). A believer must look at the result of the adversity, not the adversity itself. Paul did not view difficulty with self-pity, but used the problems to proclaim the gospel in distinctive ways. The verb "TURNED OUT" emphasizes the lasting effects of past difficulties – literally means "HAVE COME".

PERSONAL WITNESS (13)

At this point, Paul wanted to show how God had used his arrest and subsequent two imprisonments to advance the gospel message ("SO THAT"). Paul was before the Roman court because he was a Christian, not because he had committed a crime. Paul was in Rome as a witness, not as a defendant. He asked his friends to pray for this unique outreach opportunity (Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 4:3-4).

Two spheres of witness are mentioned. FIRST, he spoke to "THE WHOLE PALACE GUARD". The Greek word *praetorian* is normally transliterated as "praetorium". The praetorian guards were the official bodyguards of the emperor, the elite special forces of the empire, which also took charge of all imperial prisoners. They received double pay and special privileges. These are the very soldiers that guarded Paul during his two years of house arrest. Paul was able to witness to the guard. These guards observed how Paul spoke to his friends, how he wrote, and how he prayed. The guards were changed every 6 hours and a great number of them were saved (Philippians 4:22). CAN YOU IMAGE BEING ASSIGNED TO PAUL FOR A FULL SHIFT?

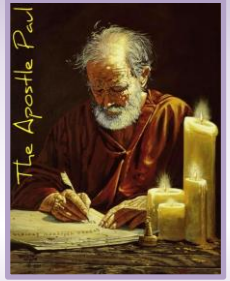
SECOND, Paul spoke "TO ALL THE REST". Paul had the opportunity to give witness to other types of soldiers, to household servants, and to the government officials, including Nero. Paul's witness was successful, for he claimed that some of Caesar's household were believers (Philippians 4:22).

ENCOURAGEMENT OF PREACHERS (14)

Paul's presence in Rome as a political prisoner caused a stir within the local church. The majority of the believers were stimulated to intensify their evangelistic efforts. Paul gives four distinctives for these believers. (1) They constituted the majority ("MOST"). (2) They were definitely believers - ("BRETHREN") who are "IN THE LORD". (3) They had "BECOME CONFIDENT BY" Paul's "CHAINS". (4) They had become "MUCH MORE BOLD TO SPEAK THE WORD WITHOUT FEAR." Christ encouraged His

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disciples not to fear (Matthew 10:28), and Paul did likewise to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:7-8).

CHRIST IS PREACHED: (1:15-19)

SOME PREACHED WITH BAD MOTIVES (15A-16)

Paul divides the majority who were encouraged “to speak the word without fear”, into two groups (“**SOME**”). Both preached the same redemptive message (“**PREACH CHRIST**”), but each group had different motives for doing so. The first group preached with bad motives. (1) They preached “**FROM ENVY**”. Envy is a work of the flesh, a sin caused by a lack of submission to the Holy Spirit and a lack of love for the brethren (Galatians 5:16, 21, 26). (2) They preached from “**STRIFE**”. Envy is the inward emotion; strife is its outward expression. It is also a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20), a manifestation of the unsaved life (Romans 1:29), and a result of false teaching (1 Timothy 6:4). Strife results when believers choose to follow certain leaders to the neglect of others (1 Corinthians 3:3). (3) They preached “**FROM SELFISH AMBITION**”. Such lack of humility is the cause of personal rivalry (Philippians 2:3). It is also a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). (4) They did not preach “**SINCERELY**”. This word was used of that which was holy and sacred, free from ceremonial defilement. These teachers preached because they loved their own reputations, not from pure motives. (5) They preached (“**SUPPOSING TO ADD AFFLICTION TO MY CHAINS**”). Their intent was to aggravate the Apostle Paul.

SOME PREACHED WITH GOOD MOTIVES (15B, 17)

Paul presents **THREE** characteristics of the “**GOOD MOTIVES**” group. (1) They spoke “**FROM GOODWILL**”. The Greek word means “that which seems to be good”. This group loved to preach Christ, and they wanted to encourage Paul. (2) They preached out of “**LOVE**”. In this context, their love was directed basically toward Paul. Love for the brethren always reflects love for Christ.

(3) They knew why Paul was in prison (“**KNOWING THAT I AM APPOINTED FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL**”). The apostle’s trial was really a defense of the gospel message of redemption through Christ and thus a trial of Jesus Christ Himself.

ALL PREACHED CHRIST (18)

In Paul’s analysis of the preachers, he came to **TWO** conclusions. (1) Regardless of their motivation, the content of their message was orthodox. They did preach Christ (Philippians 1:1-16, 18). They were theologically correct in the doctrines of Christology and soteriology. (2) Paul could rejoice over the proclamation of their message (“**AND IN THIS I REJOICE**”). He could rejoice that their message was sound, that Christ was magnified, that sinners were regenerated, and that they were his brethren.

INCREASE OF SUPPORT (19)

It was conceivable that the apostle could be found guilty and that he be martyred as a Roman criminal (Philippians 1:20-21). However, he fully expected to be set free (Philippians 1:24-25). His conviction about his forthcoming release is here stated in the verb “**I KNOW**”, in the Greek an inner persuasion conveyed by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The fact of Paul’s release is seen in the phrase “**MY DELIVERANCE**”.

Paul predicated his freedom on **TWO** means of support. (1) **BY MAN**: One means of support was the intercession of believers (“**THROUGH YOUR PRAYERS**”). When believers lovingly pray for one another, God will accomplish His work. (2) **BY GOD**: In the program of redemption, God and humans are co-laborers (1 Corinthians 3:9). The prayers of saints and the provision of God are two complementary sides of the same divine-human activity. Divine help is here called “**THE PROVISION OF THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST**”. The Holy Spirit is called “**THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST**” because He was sent by the Son as well as by the Father and because He has glorified Jesus Christ at all times (John 15:26; 16:14).