

Paul's Joyful Letter to the *Philippians*

CHAPTER 1: THE SINGLE MIND

Furtherance of the Gospel (1:12-26)

Paul's Chains (Christ was known) (1:12-14)

- 1:12 Now I want you to know ¹⁷, brothers ¹⁸, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. [¹⁷*ginōskō*: to know from experience; ¹⁸*adelphos*: a womb (lit)] Paul was referring to his arrest in Jerusalem, the circumstances that carried him to Rome, as well as his imprisonment there. ^{Acts 21:17-28:31} Instead of thinking his captivity hindered his efforts to spread the gospel, Paul knew God was using his circumstances to allow him to present the truth of the gospel to the prison workers and inmates. ^{Acts 28:30-31}
- 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. It was obvious Paul was not in chains for being a criminal ^{2 Timothy 2:8-9}, but for loving and serving the Lord by being His ambassador in chains to the “whole palace guard and to everyone else” for the “mystery of the gospel” ^{Ephesians 6:19-20} and the “mystery of Christ” ^{Colossians 4:3}. At least part of the time, Paul was bound with two chains ^{Acts 21:33} (probably between two soldiers as Peter was earlier ^{Acts 12:6}).
- 1:14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word ¹⁹ of God more courageously and fearlessly. [¹⁹*logos*: word as an expression of wisdom] Courage by a Christian leader can inspire others to achieve more for the Lord than they would have done otherwise. Paul looked positively at what God was doing through his trials and encouraged other followers of Jesus to “remember” his chains ^{Colossians 4:18}, because he endured the hardships in order to inspire them ^{2 Timothy 2:10}. After Onesimus had run away from his master Philemon, Paul appealed to Philemon for mercy, because Onesimus had supported Paul, and even became his spiritual “son”, when Paul was in chains. ^{Philemon 1:10}

Paul's Critics (Christ was preached) (1:15-19)

- 1:15-17 It is true that some preach ²⁰ Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach ²¹ Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. [²⁰*kērussō*: proclaim; ²¹*kataggellō*: intentionally declare (lit)] There are teachers who teach humbly ^{Acts 20:19} with the right heart perspective and some who do not. Of those who teach from wrong motives, some even teach false doctrines on purpose ^{2 Corinthians 11:13}, and this will become more common with the approach of the end times ^{2 Timothy 4:3-4}. Everyone who preaches

or teaches should understand the seriousness of their responsibility ^{James 3:1}, because God will take a harsh stance against those who teach with the wrong motives ^{Romans 2:8}. Moreover, without a basis of love, even if genuine doctrine is taught, the teacher will not obtain any eternal gain for himself ^{1 Corinthians 13:1-2}. Not only were some preaching out of wrong motives, but they also wanted to do harm to Paul. However, others like Onesiphorus ^{2 Timothy 1:16} & Onesimus ^{Philemon 1:12-13} came to Paul in prison with loving support.

1:18-19 **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, 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.** The content of the message is what matters to those who hear. If the truth of the Biblical Jesus Christ is preached ^{2 Corinthians 1:19}, then the motive of the presenter is irrelevant to the results. Paul rejoiced at the power of God in the name of Jesus. He also rejoiced at God's power activated through helping prayer ^{2 Corinthians 1:10-11} and supplied by His Spirit ^{Acts 1:8}, like He did for Paul in Asia ^{Acts 16:7}. The "deliverance" Paul spoke of could have been his confidence in God preparing to deliver Paul from his existing trial ^{Psalms 41:1}, by arranging for Paul to escape execution ^{Psalms 33:18-19} and/or perhaps his release from prison ^{Philemon 1:22}, or maybe Paul was referring to the fulfillment of his eternal salvation ^{Psalms 22:3-5}.

Paul's Crisis (Christ was exalted) (1:20-26)

1:20 **I eagerly expect and hope²² 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 life²³ or by death.** [²²*elpis*: the expectation of obtaining something good; ²³*zōē*: life in the spirit & soul] When persecution comes (with Paul it was beatings, imprisonment and the possibility of execution), Christians should not recoil in shame ^{1 Peter 4:12-14}, but are called to rejoice in the "hope" (guaranteed promises) of God ^{Romans 5:1-2} which will produce great boldness ^{2 Corinthians 3:12} and many blessings ^{Isaiah 49:23}. Three great OT examples of this principle were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego ^{Daniel 3}. The Lord will not allow anyone who sincerely trusts in Him to be put to shame ^{Psalms 25:1-3, Romans 9:33}, because they will honor God with their body, which is the temple of His (the Holy) Spirit ^{1 Corinthians 6:19-20}. In contrast, sinners will surely be shamed and punished ^{Isaiah 1:28-31}.

1:21 **For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.** In both life and in death, Christ is everything ^{Romans 14:8}.

1:22-24 **If I am to go on living in the body²⁴, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.** [²⁴*sarx*: flesh] Continuing to live would provide Paul the opportunity to go on serving God ^{John 12:26} by spreading the gospel and building the church. However, Paul saw both life and death as choices to be desired, but admits the afterlife in the presence of Jesus is the better choice ^{2 Corinthians 5:1-8}. The Greek word translated as "depart" is a term that was used in politics to mean "to release a prisoner" and by sailors to mean "to set sail". Paul could see the joy of being

released from the bondage of his fallen flesh ^{2 Timothy 4:6-8} in order to be free to journey to his Lord.

Nevertheless, Paul also realized his calling of starting & nurturing Gentile churches was not yet complete.

1:25-26 **Convinced**⁷ of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

Paul puts the needs of the people ahead of his personal desires: “I desire to depart and be with Christ” ^{v.24}. He knew the gospel work was God’s, but that God was working through him. Either Paul was speaking of his physical presence ^{Philippians 2:24} or his presence through his disciples (e.g., Epaphroditus ^{Philippians 2:25}).

Some scholars believe this section implies (proves?) that Paul was released from imprisonment in Rome.

Faith of the Gospel (1:27-30)

Consistency (1:27a), Cooperation (1:27b), Confidence (1:28-30)

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**²⁵, **contending as one man**²⁶ **for the faith of the gospel** [²⁵*pneuma*: the wind; ²⁶*psuchē*: soul] Living a “worthy” life is a common NT exhortation for followers of Jesus ^{Ephesians 4:1, Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12}. However, of course Christians will never be fully “worthy” of the gospel (similar to the fact that they can never be righteous enough to deserve salvation), but they are called to live vastly different lives than worldly people (more Christ-like) ^{Ephesians 4:2, Philippians 4:8, 1 Peter 2:11-12, 2 Peter 3:11}. Paul also emphasized the important concept of saints living unified lives in God (in spirit, heart and body) ^{Romans 15:5-6, Ephesians 4:3-6}.

1:28-29 **...without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed**²⁷, **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**²⁸ **on him, but also to suffer for him,** [²⁷*apōleia*: lost/ruined; ²⁸*pisteuō*: have faith] Jesus taught Christians to not fear enemies who can only harm the body ^{Luke 12:4-7}. The Spirit, through Paul, reiterated the principle ^{Hebrews 13:6}, and stated all earthly battles have a spiritual basis ^{Ephesians 6:10-12}. In addition, spiritual battles and persecution are actually signs of true salvation ^{Matthew 5:10-12, 2 Timothy 3:12}, but the Lord has provided all the help a believer needs to overcome these trials ^{John 16:33, Ephesians 6:13-17}. Both faith in and suffering for Christ is “granted”, and therefore both are gifts/privileges. ^{Acts 5:41, 1 Peter 4:14}

1:30 **...since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.** The Christian church in Philippi was struggling with people contending against the gospel ^{Philippians 4:3}. Living sincerely and passionately for the Lord is a “struggle” ^{Colossians 1:29, 2:1, 2 Timothy 4:7}, because of the opposition from the spiritual forces of evil ^{Ephesians 6:12}. In fact, the church “saw” Paul and Silas “struggle” when they had been earlier flogged and imprisoned in Philippi ^{Acts 16:19-40}. Believers are called to stand “in the face of suffering” ^{Hebrews 10:32-36}, but to also remember that many others are battling, too ^{1 Corinthians 10:13}.

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