

PHILIPPIANS

LESSON THREE

JOY IN THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

(1:12-20)

Overview

- I. The Context
 - A. Paul is in prison for preaching the Gospel of Christ
 - B. The Philippians have helped and supported Paul in these efforts
 - C. In spite of trying times – for both Paul and the Philippians – Paul writes of joy, simply because the Word of God is being preached

- II. “I Rejoice, You Rejoice!”
 - A. A theme of this passage is that good can come out of bad situations
 1. Note that Paul did not ignore the bad
 2. However, it did not allow it to dominate his thinking or ruin his day
 3. The Philippians must learn to do the same (cf. 3:2; 4:2)
 - B. Though Paul was suffering, he did not write to seek sympathy but to encourage!
 - C. His focus was not on how things were with him, but on how things were with the Gospel.
 1. He had a captive audience
 2. He set a powerful example of true Christianity
 3. The brethren were encouraged and emboldened

- III. There Is No Competition among Lighthouses
 - A. One of Paul’s greatest sources of joy was when the Gospel was preached
 - B. And, it did not matter who was doing the preaching, as long as the Truth was taught
 - C. Good can come, even from a bad attitude!

- IV. God Is Faithful – Glorify Him
 - A. Paul’s joy and confidence was grounded in the faithfulness of God
 1. God is in control
 2. God works through His providence
 3. God hears and answers prayer
 - B. God is faithful, even in the death of His children
 - C. Therefore, Paul desired to live and die with boldness so God would be glorified and Paul would never be ashamed

1:12 **But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel**

- A. As in all things, Paul (and the Holy Spirit who inspired the words) wanted brethren to have knowledge and understanding.
- B. Specifically, he wanted them to know of the good that had come from what might be viewed as a bad situation.
 - 1. By this time, Paul was in his 3rd or 4th year of imprisonment
 - 2. One might expect that his usefulness as a preacher had been greatly diminished.
 - 3. But, the opposite was true.
- C. Paul's circumstances actually had resulted in the furtherance of the Gospel.
 - 1. The word translated "furtherance" comes from a verb that literally means, "to cut or strike forward."
 - 2. It was used of those who went before an army to clear a path for them by cutting down trees, hedges, etc.
 - 3. It came to be used by the Stoics for a "progress toward wisdom."
 - 4. It is found in Philippians 1:25 and 1 Timothy 4:15. *{Its opposite is found in Galatians 5:7 and 1 Peter 3:7.}*
- D. The Bible is filled with example of God bringing great and good things out of bad situations (Genesis 50:20; Exodus 18:10-11; Esther 9:1; Psalm 76:10; Acts 8:4; 11:19-21; Romans 8:28, 37; 2 Timothy 2:9).

1:13 **So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places**

- A. Paul's situation provided an open door into places where he might never have been able to preach otherwise.
- B. Note that Paul's bonds were "in Christ."
 - 1. He suffered for being a Christian and preaching the Truth.
 - 2. In fact, in the ASV and ESV, the verse reads that Paul's bonds are manifest (made known) as being in Christ.
 - 3. In other words, it became obvious to everyone that Paul was not imprisoned for being a criminal, but for his religious beliefs.
 - 4. The sympathy created by this awareness further opened doors for Paul to preach the Gospel.
- C. Paul's audience is described as "all the palace."
 - 1. The word for palace is *praetorium* – the Praetorian Guard.
 - 2. It is a reference to the headquarters of a Roman camp.
 - 3. It referred to the Roman governor's courtroom, hall of judgment, or palace (place of residence).
 - 4. It is translated as "judgment hall" (John 18:28, 33; 19:9; Acts 23:35) and "common hall" (Matthew 27:27) – Mark's account calls this the Praetorium (Mark 15:16).
- D. But, his influence was not limited to the palace for his story was known by all the rest.
- E. Again, the idea is that anyone with an honest heart who heard of Paul recognized that he was suffering in innocence.

1:14 **And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear**

- A. Vincent writes: "The boldness required to profess Christ within the precincts of the palace is illustrated by the *graffito* or *wall-scribble* discovered in 1857 among the ruins on the Palatine. It is a caricature of Christ on the cross, with an ass's head, while on the left appears a Christian youth in an attitude of adoration. Underneath are scrawled the words *Alexamenos worships God.*"
- B. There is some discussion about where the phrase "in the Lord" belongs.
 - 1. Some argue that it describes the brethren who were united in the Lord.
 - 2. Others think it should modify the verb "waxing confident."
 - 3. If this is right, it would mean that they became more confident in the faithfulness of the Lord as they witnessed Paul's work while in chains.
- C. Paul's courage and the Lord's faithfulness were contagious.
- D. Brethren became more abundantly bold in speaking the Word of God.
- E. They were not governed by fear, but confident in the Lord.

1:15 **Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will**

- A. How sad it is that some were envious of Paul and wanted to make his situation even worse.
 - 1. How could one be jealous of an imprisoned man?
 - 2. Yet, Paul had strong influence upon the brethren and there always seem to be those who love to have the preeminence (3 Jn. 9).
- B. So, they preached Christ with an attitude of jealousy and rivalry.
- C. Yet, there were others who preached with an attitude of good will toward Paul (and, of course, toward the Gospel).
- D. It is important to note that both groups preached Christ – that is, they preached the Truth.
 - 1. Paul had no love for error or false teachers.
 - 2. If these men were proponents of error, Paul's reaction would have been very different (cf. Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17).

1:16 **The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds**

- A. Those who preached out of envy and strife desired factions within the church.
 - 1. They wanted brethren to follow them, not Paul.
 - 2. Thayer defines the word contention as "electioneering or intriguing for office; a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and fractious spirit which does not disdain low arts."
 - 3. Paul only wanted brethren to follow Jesus.
- B. Furthermore, they did not preach with unmixed motives – they were not pure in their attitudes, but were mixed with evil.
- C. Their goal was to add affliction to Paul's bonds – literally, to increase the pressure of his bonds in order to irritate and vex him.

- 1:17 **But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel**
- A. The other group preached Christ out of an attitude of love.
 - 1. Of course, their love was for the Lord and His Word.
 - 2. But, there was also a feeling of love for Paul.
 - B. Verse 15 makes it clear that they desired “good will” toward Paul.
 - 1. They understood the situation he was facing and the work he had done for the cause of Christ.
 - 2. They knew his attitude and determination to defend the Truth.
 - 3. Thus, they did not want to add to his burdens in any way.
 - 4. Instead, they wanted to aid him in carrying his work and theirs – the preaching of the Gospel.
 - 5. They understood that there is no competition among lighthouses.
 - C. Their attitude was based upon their knowledge that Paul was set for the defense of the Gospel.
 - 1. The word “knowing” comes from the Greek word for seeing – they knew because they had seen Paul’s life and actions.
 - 2. The word “set” comes from a Greek word meaning “to lie, to be set or put in place.”
 - 3. It was often used metaphorically of something that was appointed. *{For example, to “lay down” the law}*
 - 4. So, Paul was appointed to his task of defending the Gospel of Christ.
 - 5. He would not budge from that task, even if it meant imprisonment or death.
 - D. All Christians must be set for the defense of the Gospel (cf. Jude 3).
- 1:18 **What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or it truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice**
- A. What was Paul’s reaction toward those who were preaching Christ? He rejoiced, and would continue to rejoice.
 - B. Paul did not approve of or condone their bad attitudes.
 - C. However, he was glad that the truth was being preached.
 - 1. Paul did not allow personal feelings come before or stand in the way of God’s will being done.
 - 2. He was not seeking his own personal glory or looking for an opportunity to promote himself.
 - 3. He was a preacher and an apostle, not a politician.
- 1:19 **For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ**
- A. Paul knew that the eventual result of all of these things would be his soul’s salvation.
 - 1. This was his supreme focus and goal.
 - 2. This was why he could endure the envy and insincerity of others.
 - 3. This was how he could tolerate imprisonment and suffering.
 - 4. The most important thing to Paul was his salvation.
 - B. As he labored to serve the Lord in faithfulness, he needed the prayers of his brethren in Christ.
 - C. He also depended upon the supply of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. The Spirit supplied Paul (and all men) with the Truth.

2. God's Word, which is essential to man's salvation, was revealed by the Holy Spirit.
 3. Without it, Paul could not be saved, the Gospel could not be preached, and there would be no cause for rejoicing.
- D. It should be noted that some believe the salvation that Paul refers to in this verse is his deliverance from prison (cf. 1:26). However, the immediate context (vs. 20) seems to refer to spiritual salvation.

1:20 **According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death**

- A. Paul's goal, focus and desire for his life was to magnify Jesus.
- B. In fact, he says that this is his "earnest expectation."
 1. This word is a compound of three Greek words.
 2. It literally means to watch with the head outstretched.
 3. It is "waiting in suspense," "anxious and persistent expectation," and "intense anticipation."
 4. Keep in mind, Paul's "intense anticipation" was to glorify Christ!
- C. This desire was joined with hope – meaning, "joyful and confident expectation."
- D. There are two senses of the shame mentioned in this verse.
 1. First, Paul did not wish to do anything that he would be ashamed of or that would cause him shame.
 2. He did not want to bring shame upon the name of Christ or the Christian faith.
 3. Second, he knew that his hope and expectation would not be disappointed; for he had surrendered himself to the Lord.
 4. He knew that whether he lived or died, God would be faithful to him and fulfill his hopes.
- E. So, Paul desired to continue to have the boldness to live the Christian life and to preach the pure and powerful Gospel of Christ.
- F. And, whatever happened to him, it would be to the glory of God.
 1. The word magnify means, "to make or declare great, to get glory or praise."
 2. Paul's wish was that his body – either by living for Christ or by dying for Christ – would get glory for the Lord.
- G. Again, notice the emphasis – Paul was not concerned for himself (even for his own life), but for the glory of God.
- H. Thus, he lived a life of true joy – for he found peace in any circumstance, so long as he was serving God, the Gospel was being preached and the Lord was being glorified.