

# Entrusted With the Stewardship of Your Life

## *Living Missionally for the King and His Kingdom*

**Text:** Philippians 1:3-16, 27-29

**Philippians 1:3-16:** *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> **because of your partnership in the gospel** from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, **for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.** <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

<sup>9</sup>And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. <sup>12</sup> **I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,** <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. <sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. <sup>16</sup> The latter do it out of love, **knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.**

**Philippians 1:27-29:** *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup> and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. <sup>29</sup> **For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,** <sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.*

## **Introduction:**

James reminds us that our earthly life is like a “vapor” or a “breath” that is visible for a brief moment and then vanishes (James 4:14).

His concern is that we use our brief “breath” for eternal rather than temporal purposes – that we live for the right kingdom.

One of the big points we learned from this wise pastor was that using our life for kingdom purposes may mean that God will send us to a hard place or a dark space to accomplish some significant Gospel purpose or kingdom work in us or accomplish through us.

James teaches us to think about our life in radically different ways than others around us think about their own brief earthly journey.

According to James, life is a stewardship God entrusts to each of us to be used wisely and deployed strategically for advancing God’s name and building His kingdom rather than our own.

Simply put – this means every circumstance and each experience that touches our lives is somehow tied to the strategic advancement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the dark kingdoms where we currently live, move, and have our being.

But what does this look like in real time? It looks like an early Gospel-risk taker leaving his comfortable, respectable life to take the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the cities of the Roman Empire – and willingly experiencing great difficulty, suffering, and persecution for doing so. His name is Paul and this morning I want us to drop into a conversation he is having with a group of first-century gospel-risk takers who were disheartened by his suffering and discouraged by their own – to the point that some were wondering if living for the gospel was really such a great life investment or worthy endeavor in light of the immense personal cost required.

## **The historical context of Philippians:**

- Philippi was a large, well-known, and highly influential city in Greece (Macedonia) – a military outpost, super loyal to Rome and to the Emperor who was considered officially as the Lord and Savior of the Empire
- Two travelers (Paul and Silas) had come into this city to announce the good news that a greater Lord and a better Savior than the Emperor (Nero) had appeared to offer salvation to anyone in Philippi who would believe the gospel, repent of sin, and place their full trust (whole-hearted, single-focused, fully-trusting faith) in this Lord and Savior – Jesus Christ.
- God verified the truth of their message by mighty miracles that displayed His power to deliver people from the bondage of Satan – most spectacularly, a beaten and traumatized demon-possessed slave girl who was being used by her owners to earn great wealth.
- Paul and Silas were soon arrested for their incendiary message and imprisoned in the city jail. However, at mid-night as they were singing praises to God about Jesus, God shook the entire city and released His faithful servants from the bonds placed on them by the Roman officials. Before it was all over, one of those Roman officials, the Jailer and his entire family, came to believe their message and personally experienced the power and freedom of the Gospel they had come to announce.
- Within a few short weeks, many others joined the Roman Jailer in repenting and believing in Jesus and a church was born. A church was established of people who were delivered from the kingdom of darkness and who now were called to use their lives and resources to advance the name of a new and better Lord and Savior to everyone in the city of Philippi.

## **The spiritual context of Philippians:**

- Initially these believers were filled with great joy as they celebrated the salvation they had received. They worshiped thankfully and witnessed fervently – and then reality hit! They began to experience the same opposition Paul had experienced when he had arrived among them. Moreover, this opposition and persecution intensified in the early years of their existence. Some of their own had been imprisoned. Others were facing the threat of being dragged into the public arena to face wild beasts.

- Perhaps most discouraging of all was the fact that the miraculous deliverance they had witnessed when God rescued Paul and Silas from their city jail seemed like a fluke – a one time wonder. And to confirm their sad conclusion, they had just learned that Paul himself was again a prisoner – this time in Rome where, charged with sedition against Rome, he awaited trial and probable execution by the sword.
- Frankly, some of them were wondering whether this kind of life investment that appeared to cost believers everything (3:7) was really worthwhile – and some were actually turning back to their old values and priorities (*setting their mind back on earthly things* 3:17-19).
- And so Paul put pen to paper from his prison cell in Rome and sent a four-chapter letter to his beloved Gospel partners at Philippi to ***encourage, exhort, and remind them that their life was not their own – it had been entrusted to them to steward wisely and intentionally*** for a better kingdom than Rome.
- And the suffering that looked so constraining was in fact a powerful gift of grace from God (1:29-30) that was actually advancing the gospel in far greater ways than were immediately visible to them.

*Of the many spiritual truths Paul wrote them, four stand out as **powerful reminders and personal motivations** to steward our lives by living missionally to advance the gospel and build God's kingdom around us.*

***If we desire to steward our lives well for the gospel, we must:***

## **I. Cultivate Relationships Centered on the Fellowship Gospel**

***Philippians 1:3-8:*** *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> **because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.** <sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

- The Philippians lived in a society where the concept of “friendship” was an important component to doing life and business.

- Friendship in the Greco-Roman world was very different from the way you and I understand friendship.
- Usually “friendship” in their context happened between two equal parties who entered into a relational agreement in order to achieve some mutually agreed upon goal or common objective.
- Friendship involved certain expectations – like virtue and goodness, personal loyalty, goodwill, reciprocity – giving and receiving. It involved standing together to overcome obstacles or to stand against a common enemy. And most of all, friendship was active and dynamic and not passive or uninvolved.
- ***The word you and I would use to describe this concept is our word “Partnership.”*** The term Paul uses 6x in the book for this concept is the term “fellowship” or “partaker” (1:5,7; 2:1, 3:10; 4:14,15).
- This is what Jesus meant when He told his disciples they were no longer just servants with no stake in the mission He had come to accomplish but rather, they were not His friends – His ***partners*** in this mission.  
(*John 15:15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*)
- ***Paul describes his relationship with the Philippians as:***
  - A. ***Centered on the Gospel (v. 5)***  
*because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now*
    - Fellowship = Partnership
    - Committed, active involvement in a common cause
  - B. ***Divine in Origin (v. 6a)***  
*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*
    - Their common experience in the Gospel was not something they decided to do on their own – it was orchestrated by God!
    - Because God orchestrated it in such an undeniable way, they could rest confidently in God’s work (*I am sure of this...*).
  - C. ***Empowered and sustained by God (v. 6b)***  
*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

- We often see this “good work” referenced here as being salvation and sanctification and other texts affirm this concept.
- However, *in this text* I think Paul is referring to the long-standing Gospel Partnership God had established between them when He sent Paul to bring them the Gospel.

**D. Flavored by genuine love and deep affection (v. 8)**

*For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

- The only thing powerful enough to bring this diverse group of Gentiles and this former Jewish Rabbi together with this kind of genuine love and deep affection was their common experience in the gospel!
- This deep love and affection resulted in deep gratitude (1:3) and sacrificial giving (2:17 – *even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all!*)

**E. Displayed through the Church (v. 7a; 4:15)**

*1:7 – It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.*

*4:15 – And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.*

- In the heart of this Roman Colony that served as an outpost of Rome in Greece, God has planted a heavenly colony as an outpost of His glorious Kingdom!
- The citizens of this kingdom served a One who had a greater name and better salvation than anything Nero could offer.
- In fact, there would come a day when even Nero himself would bow his knee and confess that Jesus is Lord (2:9-10)!
- But until that day, the citizens of this new kingdom were to advance the name of Jesus and it would entail great suffering.

### **f. *Advanced by Suffering (v. 7b)***

*for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.*

- So, this brings us to the first penetrating applicational question: What is at the heart of your close relationships? Would you describe them as “gospel partnerships?”
- Over the years, I have enjoyed many friendships – however, some of the most cherished of them are Gospel partnerships that have involved some aspect of gospel advancement around the world. All of them were costly; many of them involved suffering.
- Are you intentionally seeking to cultivate and develop deep friendships that involve sharing the gospel and advancing God’s kingdom right here in this church and in the communities where we live?

## **II. Display Lives Transformed by the Power of the Gospel**

*Philippians 1:9–11 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,<sup>10</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,<sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

- Effective Gospel partnerships must be validated by the transformation the gospel we preach is making in our lives.
- Paul expresses this truth in his prayer for his dear gospel partners at Philippi – when He prays that God would help them to be:

### **A. *Growing and Abounding in Love (v. 9a)***

*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more*

- When we first come to Christ, we love Him with all the capacity our hearts have for loving Him. However, as we grow in grace, God grows our capacity to love Him and to love others.
- Illustration: On your wedding day, you love your bride with all of your heart. But 25 years later, your love has grown in such a way that your earlier love seems like teenage love!

## **B. Increasing in Spiritual Understanding and Insight (v. 9b)**

*with knowledge and all discernment,*

- In addition to increasing your capacity to love God and others, you also grow in your understanding of His will and in your ability to do that will through your life.

## **C. Developing in Spiritual Maturity and Personal Consistency as you live in the light of His coming! (v. 10)**

*so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,*

## **D. Displaying the fruit of righteousness that comes through the grace of Jesus and not our own human efforts (v. 11).**

*filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God*

### **III. Embrace Values and Priorities Established by the Gospel**

**Philippians 1:12-14:** *I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,<sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.<sup>14</sup> And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

#### **A. See every circumstance as a Gospel opportunity**

*1:12 – I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,*

#### **B. Seize every opportunity to share the Gospel clearly and boldly**

*<sup>13</sup> so that it has become known **throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest** that my imprisonment is for Christ.*

#### **C. Ask God to use your circumstances to motivate others to Gospel boldness.**<sup>14</sup> *And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

- From a human perspective, the imprisonment of the best Gospel witness in the first century made no sense. However, from a Divine perspective, Paul's imprisonment was a brilliant strategic move – and by the end of this letter, people in Nero's own household had become Christians (4:21 – *all the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household*).



So, what is the evidence that we have truly embraced the gospel partnership that God has called us to have with His Son who came to seek and save those who are lost?

How will we know that we are shaping our lives by the values and priorities of His kingdom and not our own?

#### **IV. Deploy Life and Use Resources for the Advancement of the Gospel**

##### ***A. Evidence #1 – We will gladly deploy our life for this mission as Jesus deployed His own life to accomplish our salvation.***

*Philippians 1:27-29: Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,<sup>28</sup> and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.<sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,<sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.*

##### ***B. Evidence #2 – We will use our earthly resources for the advancement of this gospel and for the interests of His kingdom.***

*Philippians 2:3-4: Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.<sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

#### **Conclusion:**

Will we give ourselves entirely to God and enter whole-heartedly into this amazing partnership with His Son no matter the earthly cost – OR – will we content ourselves with 3\$ worth of God? Just enough of God to get us to heaven and give us a good life on earth but not enough of God to radically transform us and energize us to embrace and engage in this kind of partnership that will take us from gospel tasters and turn us into Gospel-risk takers!

Illustration: John Patton's sermon in 1848 upon being admonished by a member of the congregation that his foolhardy notion of taking the gospel to

the South Sea islands would end with him being eaten by cannibals: *“Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now and your prospect is soon to be laid in the grave and there to be eaten by worms. I confess to you that if I can but live and die serving and honoring Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by cannibals or by worms; and on the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen redeemer!”*

Patton was right – as a Gospel risk taker, it mattered little what happened to his earthly body or his earthly resources – but it mattered immensely to the cannibals he went to gospelize!

He spent more than 30 years on those islands and at the end of his life he had worn out his body and exhausted his earthly resources – but over 100,000 cannibals had heard the gospel through his preaching.

- 3,500 converts on Aneityum
- 13,000 converts on Fiji
- 34,000 converts on Samoa
- 12,000 converts on the New Hebrides

John Patton was a simple man who had a big view of God, a big view of the gospel, and a small view of his earthly life and resources and the trinkets and bangles found in the kingdom of the world that have captured the hearts and minds of so many of God’s servants.

Will you pray with me that God would turn us from being gospel tasters and spectators to committed, engaged Gospel partners who will use our lives and resources to reach people around us for Christ.

**Let us ask God for this Goal: *One service to render, one material sacrifice to make, one lost soul to reach.***