

Making the Most of Where You Are

Philippians 1:12-30

Introduction

Good morning, Lighthouse. Are you ready for the Word of God? Have you ever been told God has a plan for your life? I've heard it in places like church and especially in Christian graduation ceremonies. Often, I've seen passages like Jeremiah 29:11 be attached to the statement, and it is kept generic to say "God has a plan for you," So is it true God does have a plan for your life? Absolutely. Many times, when the preacher or the speakers says this, what do they mean by it? Prosperity and a lot of pleasant things coming your way, you're going to snag that cool job, make a lot of money, buy a big house, cool car etc... but what if I told you this morning that often the plans God has for your life may include lots of hardships, pain, and suffering? Not a popular thing at all to say in front of a bunch new graduates let alone in a pulpit nowadays. Do you ever feel things never seem to go according to your plan? I'm sure the Apostle Paul had the same mindset at times. In Acts 9, we read about Paul's encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus. His plans were to persecute Christians, but God had something else in mind. God then speaks to a believer in Damascus named Ananias and tells him to go to Paul. Here is Ananias' response:

Acts 9:13-16 (13) Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: (14) And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. (15) But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: (16) For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. Notice again in verse 16, God's plans for Paul included suffering for His name's sake.

Paul being imprisoned in Rome because of preaching Jesus. However, while our plans change and often outside our control, there are greater plans that God has in store and we can be assured to trust Him through it all. In this letter, we read about Paul's situation under Roman imprisonment as he writes to the church in Philippi, a church he had close relation to and calls beloved. At the end of Acts 28, we see Paul put under house arrest awaiting his trial. This lasted 2 years, it was during this time he wrote 4 books of our New Testament: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians. 10 years before writing this epistle, Paul and Silas together ended up in Philippi where we read about the conversion of Lydia and the jailor. This is primarily a gentile area and it happens to be the first church established in Europe. They are a thriving church and one Paul longs to see again. Let's start our text now.

Reading of the text

Philippians 1:12-30 (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; (13) So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; (14) And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (15) Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: (16) The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: (17) But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. (18) What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. (19) For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, (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. (21) For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (22) But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. (23) For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: (24) Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. (25) And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; (26) That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. (27) Only let your

conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; (28) And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. (29) For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; (30) Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Outline

I. We must choose joy in our present circumstances, vv. 12-17.

A. Paul's situation didn't stop him from preaching the Gospel, vv. 12-14.

(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; (13) So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; (14) And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

1. Paul here answers a concern the Philippian church would have.

- a. Paul is currently imprisoned in Rome.
- b. Since Paul is imprisoned, this would concern the churches whether he could continue preaching or not.

2. He assured them his situation furthered the Gospel.

- a. During this imprisonment, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians were written.
- b. Hypothetically speaking, if it weren't for Paul being put in prison, we would not be reading from this book today, neither would we have his other prison epistles.
- c. God knew exactly what He was doing in allowing Paul to be put in jail.

Note: Think back in times where you felt everything was falling apart. Did God know exactly what He was doing? Absolutely! Some of you may be feeling this way now. Nothing is going

right and there could be no way good can come from this. We can be assured by the word of God, He knows exactly what He is doing.

3. He gives two direct reasons how his situation furthered the Gospel.

a. First, he let his life be witness to those around him. This witness led to the conversion of many, even some of the guards. I can bet on it that Paul was not complaining and begging to be set free but took every opportunity to preach the Gospel to everyone around him.

b. Second, many Christians have gained confidence in preaching the Word boldly and fearlessly through Paul's example.

(1) Paul's situation shows God can use any circumstance for His glory.

(2) It shows joy in the Lord is a choice. We have access to that same kind of joy Paul had.

(3) It shows that God has things under control.

B. Paul considers the motives of others preaching the Gospel, vv. 15-18.

(15) Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: (16) The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: (17) But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. (18) What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

1. Some preach Christ with the motive of envy and strife.

a. These were bad intentions of preaching Christ.

b. These people looked at ministry as a competition.

c. Instead of making it about Christ, they wanted to advance their own name.

Note: Jeremiah 23:28 “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.”

Jeremiah was distraught over all false prophets speaking lies about the Lord. God assured Him, He knew it all and was against it, Jeremiah needed to continue being faithful in His calling and God will sort it out. What is the chaff to the wheat? In other words, what’s it to you?

2. Others preach Christ with the motive of good will and love.

- a. These were the good intentions.
- b. The proper motive for preaching is for Christ to be glorified, never the preacher.

3. Paul sums up his perspective on the motives.

- a. Whether the motive for preaching was good or bad, he could still rejoice because Christ was preached regardless.
- b. Paul’s concern here was not with the content of the Gospel being preached, only with the motives of those who preached. Paul objected if he thought a false or distorted gospel was preached, even if from the best of motives.

Galatians 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

- c. The attitude can be summed up as this: “If you preach the true gospel, I don’t care what your motives are. If your motives are bad, God will deal with you – but the gospel is preached nevertheless. But if you preach a false gospel, I don’t care how good your motives are. You are dangerous and must stop preaching your false gospel, and good motives don’t excuse your false message.”

II. We must fix our perspective, vv. 19-26.

A. Paul's confidence in his situation, vv. 19-21.

(19) For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

(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. (21) For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

1. Paul was confident his imprisonment would turn to his salvation.

a. This salvation here he mentions is referring to a present deliverance, not a matter of being born again.

b. This would be through the prayers of the Philippians and the power of the Spirit. It's amazing how God uses prayer! Paul's needs were met by the Spirit of God, and the provision to Paul was brought about by the prayers of the Philippians.

2. Paul was confident He was in the will of God even during His imprisonment.

a. "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed."

b. Paul had the confidence that he was in the center of God's will. He knew God was not punishing him through the adversity he experienced at the time.

c. Whether he lives, or dies, Christ will be magnified in his body.

(1) This imprisonment could lead to his martyrdom, and he was completely okay with that because Christ would be glorified no matter what.

(2) We know he survived this imprisonment because he was released after 2 years. After his 2nd Roman imprisonment, he was beheaded by order of Nero.

(3) His death would mean he gets to be with the Lord!

d. Paul knew that death was not a defeat to the Christian, it is gain.

e. In Colossians, Paul also teaches to have our affection set on things above and not on earth.

Colossians 3:1-3 (1) If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

B. Paul's perspective between life and death, vv. 22-26.

(22) But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. (23) For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: (24) Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. (25) And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; (26) That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

1. Paul knew if he lived it would bear fruit.

2. He was "strait betwixt two" in other words, torn between two things.

a. First, he had desire to depart and be with Jesus.

(1) He stated in 2 Corinthians 5:8 that he would rather be absent from the body and be present with the Lord.

(2) This is why it is far better to be with the Lord: First, going to heaven meant he would finally be done with sin and temptation. Second, going to heaven meant that he would see those brothers and sisters who had gone to heaven before him.

Last and the best reason, going to heaven meant being with Christ in a closer and better way than ever before.

b. But, if he lived it would be more needful for the church.

(1) There were others that still needed him.

(2) While allowing for the possibility of his martyrdom, his expectation was to be spared this time and reunite with them.

(3) As Paul expected, it came to pass, he did reunite with the Philippians and later was martyred in Rome.

(4) Paul's friendship with the Philippians was so close that he knew that they would be rejoicing to see him again.

Note: Paul viewed his life as truly belong to Christ and as a servant. If Paul were to live, rejoice! This means Paul gets to continue to preach the Gospel and care for His brethren. If Paul were to die, rejoice! This means Paul gets to be with Jesus. Do you see how joyful the Christian life is when your focus is on the Lord? If you depart from this life you get to be with Jesus. If you're here, then He is still with you. Your life is a win-win. I get to preach the Gospel, I get to enjoy the blessings God gives, serve our youth group, lead music, serve Lighthouse Baptist Church, I get to live my life with my beautiful wife, I've got two wonderful kids, but most importantly, I get to live my life for Jesus.

III. We must pursue the furtherance of the Gospel in the manner we live, vv. 27-30.

A. The Philippian's responsibility to the Gospel, vv. 27-28.

(27) Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; (28) And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

1. Paul exhorted the Philippians to only let their conversation (or conduct) becometh the Gospel of Christ – meaning, to live in a manner consistent with the Gospel.
2. Whether absent or in person, Paul desired to hear of their affairs, and he desired unity among them so that Jesus would be shown by their actions.
3. Paul desired them to be fearless in the face of their adversaries.
 - a. When Christians stand strong against intimidation against the world, the flesh and the devil, it shows those spiritual enemies that their ultimate destruction is certain.
 - b. It also demonstrates our salvation is certain.

B. The Philippian's basis of having confidence during adversity, vv. 29-30.

(29) For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; (30) Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

1. Just as the Philippians have been given in the behalf of Christ to believe in Him, they have been given also to suffer for His sake.
 - a. Suffering is no stranger to the Christian life, it does not mean God abandons us. It gives the opportunity to grow closer to the Lord and glorify God.
 - b. Their present difficulty was given to them, not as a punishment, but as a tool in God's hand.
2. "Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me."
 - a. They had the same kind of conflict Paul faced.
 - b. Just as Paul could choose joy in the midst of the conflict, so could the Philippians.

Application

The life of Paul is one that reflects God's goodness and control in one's life. What some may intend for evil, God may intend for good as evident in the life of Joseph in the Old Testament. This surely was evident in Paul's imprisonment. It led to the salvation of soldiers and guards, it led to preachers becoming bolder to preach the Gospel, and it even led to the writing of many of his letters which we read today. So, what about you? You can dismiss all this and just look at it as "that's just Paul, my life is different, what good can come out of my circumstance?" The same God who worked in Paul's life can work in yours. First, you need to have your sin problem settled. That solution is the Gospel. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus according to the Scriptures. He died for you, took your punishment, if you would put your trust in Him to save you, then you will have eternal life. Second, if you are saved already, good news, the choice is yours on how view your situations. Will you take it and leave it to the Lord? All things work together for good, to them to that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28). You can trust God to work in you no matter wherever you are, now, you need to get to work on using your hardships as opportunities.