

## Rejoicing in Present Distress

Philippians 1:12-18a; Coast Community Church; Jackson Tran; 08-02-2020

*“Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel...” – Philippians 1:12a*

- **Rejoicing in Unforeseen Circumstances** (v. 12-13)
  - Paul is in prison for preaching the gospel
    - He is used to being on the move, always doing *something*
    - Now his ministry has come to a grinding halt and he's in chains, bound to Roman guards on a daily basis
  - This an *unforeseen* circumstance for Paul
    - Yet Paul rejoices because he's taken hold of the situation and is making it for the progress of the gospel
    - Paul reverses his circumstances
      - As a captive, Paul holds captive his captors by making sure they hear about King Jesus
  - Paul takes charge of the situation and turns it into the greater progress of the gospel
    - This is the *whole purpose* of Paul's life
      - This is not unique to Paul; many have followed in his footsteps
  - We can become frustrated with unforeseen circumstances because we are used to our comforts
    - We can become lulled to sleep by our comfort and forget that we are *not here for comfort*
      - Comfort is not a bad thing in itself
      - The *point* is that we can crave comfort so much we think that comfort is what will make us content
        - Paul's point is that we are to *be* content in *every* situation because we have all we need – and we must take hold of every situation to proclaim Jesus
    - Instead, we are here to live for Christ by making disciples of all nations
    - The Holy Spirit is our Comforter – not the leisure of this world
    - We must make the most of our time (Ephesians 5:15-17)
  - Application questions:
    - When our plans are thwarted by *unforeseen circumstances*, how do we utilize it?
    - When we are in situations that takes away our comforts – do we complain? Do we get frustrated? Do we get discouraged?
      - Or do we *rejoice* by seeking to proclaim Jesus through those unforeseen circumstances?
    - How often do we *actively* seek to proclaim Jesus and the gospel?
      - Do we seek for everyone to know the cause of Christ in any of our situations?
    - What circumstances and situations and things do we find so much comfort in that it can lull us into slumber?

- That can make us forget our mission to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength? (Mt. 22:26-28; Mk. 12:28-33a)
      - To love our neighbor as ourselves? (Mt. 22:39; Mk. 12:33b)
      - To *make disciples of all the nations*? (Mt. 28:16-20)
- **Rejoicing in Persecution** (v. 14)
  - Paul states that the Christian brothers in Rome were taking courage from his imprisonment!
    - They had courage *because of* seeing Paul's persecution!
  - To follow the example of v. 14 means that we take greater courage because of persecution to speak the Word of God!
    - Where we find persecution and governmental imposition, we should take more courage to stand firm and declare our bold allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ
  - Application questions:
    - What is our reaction when we hear of those who are persecuted, beaten, or *killed* for their faith in Jesus?
      - Do we shrink in fear?
      - Do we hide amid persecution?
      - Or will we, like the Christians who took courage from Paul's imprisonment, *have far more courage to speak the Word of God without fear because of it*?
- **Rejoicing in Opposition and Rivalry** (v. 15-18a)
  - The emphasis here happens to be those who are taking advantage of Paul's unforeseen circumstances and persecution, and then using it for their own selfish ambition in opposition to him
  - Not the first time Paul faced people who undermined his authority (1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians)
    - Paul denounces these so-called Christians as "Satan's servants in disguise" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15) and that they would be damned (Galatians 1:8)
  - The difference seems to be *content*
    - That is, even though these individuals were motivated by selfish ambition, they were still preaching the correct gospel!
      - They may be motivated by impure motives, but Paul rejoices so long as Jesus is *accurately* portrayed and the gospel fully preached
  - Application questions:
    - In what situations are you tempted to be jealous of someone else's spiritual gifts?
      - When they use it for the sake of the gospel, even from impure motives, do you rejoice?
    - Do you find yourself resentful of churches that are growing in number while God has chosen not to grow Coast in number yet?
      - Do you rejoice that Christ is being proclaimed?
- **Application**
  - In every sentence of this text, Paul mentions *Christ* or *gospel/Word of God*

- In verse 12, he celebrates the advance of the *gospel*. Verse 13, he says his bonds are for *Christ*. Verse 14, he celebrates his Christian brothers and sisters speaking the *Word* of God. Verse 15 he mentions those who preach *Christ* out of envy. Verse 16 about those who preach *Christ* out of love. Verse 17 he speaks again of those who preach *Christ* from unworthy motives. And lastly, verse 18, Paul rejoices that *Christ* is being proclaimed.
- At every turn, Paul re-envision his present distress as about Jesus and the gospel
  - Paul emulate Christ in dying to himself. Paul humbles himself – makes himself nothing and only looks to Christ. Why?
    - Because Christ *emptied Himself* and made *Himself* nothing (Philippians 2:6-8)
  - Paul is a spokesperson for Jesus – nothing more and nothing less
    - *His entire life is dedicated to the proclamation of the goodness of God in Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross and applied to His elect by the Holy Spirit*
    - To say that we must live a Christ-centered life is not to sound holy – it is literally a life centered on Christ
- We must stop looking at our *present distress* and think of how we can make it more convenient for us
  - We must stop seeking comfort *for comfort's sake*, thinking that this can somehow make us content
  - Rather, *we need to look at our present circumstances and see how it can be used to the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ*
    - We need to die to ourselves, and live for Jesus