

“Strengthening the Brethren”
Philippians 1:12-14
(Preached at Trinity, August 7, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul is writing this letter from Rome. He is under house arrest, chained to a Roman soldier 24/7. This condition continued month after month. One might be inclined to complain to God. “Why have you rewarded my faithfulness with this imprisonment?” Instead, Paul was rejoicing.
Philippians 1:12 NAU - "my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel"
2. Paul was patiently awaiting the verdict from Caesar but he wasn't absolutely convinced that he would survive his imprisonment.
Philippians 1:20 NAU - " according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."
3. Paul never allowed his circumstance to affect his attitude or his service to Christ. He continually rejoiced in the Gospel.
Philippians 2:17 NAU - "But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all."
4. Paul's ultimate desire was the he be found faithful.
1 Corinthians 4:1-2 NAU - "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy."
5. Paul used every circumstance as an opportunity to share the Gospel of Christ. He was passionate about the Gospel.
1 Corinthians 2:2 NAU - "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."
1 Corinthians 9:23 NAU - "I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it."
6. But there was another aspect of Paul's life that he was passionate about. Paul cared deeply for the wellbeing of the brethren.
 - a. He's writing to encourage the Philippian brethren
Philippians 1:3 NAU - "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you"
Philippians 1:27-28 NAU - "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸ in no way alarmed by *your* opponents-- which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that *too*, from God."
Philippians 4:4 NAU - "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"

- b. Paul always had their souls upon his heart. He taught the church passionately so that they might become more and more Christlike.
He wrote to the Corinthian Church –
2 Corinthians 11:2 NAU - "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin."
7. While in confinement in Rome Paul had these two goals always in mind: To advance the Gospel of Christ and to strengthen and encourage the brethren through his teaching and through his life.
Acts 28:30-31 NAU - "And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."
Philippians 1:13-14 NAU - "so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ* has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, ¹⁴ and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear."
8. Who are the "brethren" Paul writes about in **Verse 14**? They are Christians in Rome, most likely a part of the Church of Rome. At first they were fearful of their adversaries; fearful of what they saw happening to Paul.
A. They were looking out for their own interests.
Philippians 2:4 NAU - "do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."
B. But Paul's testimony greatly encouraged them.
9. As I preached last week, each of us should see the experiences of our life as opportunities to speak the Gospel of Christ.
Another major emphasis of each of your lives should be to strengthen and encourage the brethren. This is a part of the covenant promise we make when we join the church.
"I promise to watch over my brothers and sisters in Christ in brotherly love, and faithfully warn, exhort, and admonish them as occasion may require; to recognize my brother's and sister's liberty of conscience in Christ and not judge them in a thing not commanded by God; to remember them in prayer; to aid the brethren in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian compassion and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation."
10. How do we go about strengthening and encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ?

I. By our teaching

- A. Paul's continued passion was seeking to build up the body of Christ
1. Paul planted many churches and moved on but their wellbeing never left his heart.
 - a. He wrote countless letters to build and strengthen the church
 - b. He made many visits

Acts 15:36 NAU - "After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and* see how they are."
 2. He gave particular attention to teaching and mentoring pastors
 - a. He wrote to Timothy

2 Timothy 1:3-4 NAU - "I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, ⁴ longing to see you"
2 Timothy 1:13 NAU - "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."
 Timothy was saved under Paul's ministry and Paul referred to him as his son.
2 Timothy 2:1 NAU - "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."
 - b. Paul's word to Timothy as his mentor:

1 Timothy 4:13 NAU - "Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching."
 - c. Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders

Acts 20:20 NAU - "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house"
Acts 20:32 NAU - "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."
 3. For two years Paul was confined to his rented quarters in Rome and many would come and he would teach them – evangelizing the lost and strengthening the brethren in the faith.

Acts 28:30-31 NAU - "And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."
- B. Every one of us have a responsibility to teach one another
1. This doesn't mean we all have a teaching ministry where we stand in front of a class. The charge to "Preach the Word" isn't a charge to every believer. But we are all called to instruct one another.
 2. Every Christian is called to instruct those new to the faith. All of us should consider ourselves students of God's Word and all of us should be growing by the Word.

This is the meaning behind **Hebrews 5**

Hebrews 5:12 NAU - "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food."

3. All of us should continually have God's Word upon our tongues with a good word to offer at the right time.

Colossians 3:16 NAU - "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

4. It will fill your heart with joy as you see God using you to teach and edify your brothers and sisters in Christ; to see them prospering spiritually by your teaching.

II. By our example

A. Paul was always mindful of the importance of the example of his life

1. His frequent exhortation was, "Follow my example."

a. He writes in **Chapter 3**

Philippians 3:17 NAU - "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."

And in **Chapter 4**

Philippians 4:9 NAU - "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

b. Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica

2 Thessalonians 3:7 NAU - "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you"

2. He wrote to Timothy
2 Tim 3:10-11 - "Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, ¹¹ persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!"
3. Now he is testifying to the Philippians that his suffering in Rome was proving to be a great source of strength and encouragement to the new believers who were being persecuted in Rome.
Philippians 1:14 NAU - "most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear."
4. This is counter intuitive. You would expect the Christians in Rome to see Paul arrested for the Gospel and draw back in fear lest they suffer the same thing. Instead they were watching Paul's excellent witness. He maintained a spirit of joy, even in spite of his earthly condition. His great passion was preaching and teaching. And his boldness was not quenched by the presence of the Roman soldiers. His boldness was contagious and led to boldness in others.

5. Not only was Paul encouraging the brethren in Rome, Paul knew the Philippians too were suffering. He wanted his chains to be an encouragement to them as well.

Philippians 1:27 NAU - "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"

Philippians 1:29-30 NAU - "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me."

B. People are always watching you

1. They are looking to see what a genuine Christian looks like. The world is full of counterfeit Christians.
2. Too often the charge of hypocrite is placed upon those professing Christianity. Paul wrote to Timothy:

1 Timothy 4:1-2 NAU - " But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron"

 - a. ὑπόκρισις – the acting of a stage player - an actor who dresses up and memorizes his lines to play the part of someone he is not – convincing. In Greek drama all of the actors were men. They wore masks. They would even play female roles behind their masks.
 - b. It is also interesting that it is made up of two Greek words ὑπό - under κρίσις - judgment, damnation
 - c. A religious hypocrite is one who performs an outward religion without an inward conversion. He is only dressed up in a Christian costume – But he is not genuine. And he is already under judgement.
3. Our lives display genuine Christianity.
Your life is consistent with the Gospel you proclaim.
4. They are watching. Where do you direct your greatest energies? What interests you?
5. How do you respond to the countless adversities of life? Your faith will encourage others as they face their own adversity.

III. By our words of encouragement

A. Paul always spoke words to encourage the brethren

1. You can imagine the multitudes that came to his quarters during his months at Rome. He greeted them with a smile and a good word. They always left him encouraged to press on.
Philippians 1:14 NAU - "most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear."
2. Listen to his words to the Philippians
Philippians 1:3-4 NAU - "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all"
Philippians 1:27 NAU - "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"
Philippians 4:1 NAU - "Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long *to* see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."
Philippians 4:4-5 NAU - "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near."

B. Are your words a sweet savor to your brothers and sisters at this church?

1. Do you encourage one another with gracious words?
2. Do you express words of appreciation? Are you careful to express gratitude for the labors of others? Have you gone to Pastor Chad to thank him for teaching – that the class was encouraging to you? Or to Pastor Rob or Miss Amy for teaching your children?
3. Negative words spread like a contagion. Like a plague they infect others. How do you use your tongue?
James 3:6 NAU - "And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell."
4. Paul begins **Chapter 2**
Philippians 2:1 NAU - "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion"

Conclusion:

1. Our great desire should be for our lives to be a blessing to others—to leave a mark upon their lives.
2. It is too easy to go through life with all attention upon self, caring little for others—how they feel? What are their needs?
3. It takes great care to build up instead of tearing down. May God grant us a life that strengthens others, that cares for others. This is at the heart of Christianity.