

Philippians, Chapter One, Lesson Three

ENCOURAGING THE BRETHREN Philippians 1:12-18

STIMULATE

** If we were to follow the pattern set for us last week by the apostle Paul when he was "**Longing for the Brethren**", what would we be faithful to do when we are out of each other's company?

We would be praying for each other!

** What were the four elements of Paul's prayer on behalf of his beloved Philippians?

1. He prayed for their love to abound.
2. He prayed for them to gain more "real knowledge and all discernment".
3. He prayed for ability to test what is excellent.
4. He prayed for their spiritual integrity.

** Did you find yourself to be more prayerfully aware of your brothers and sisters in the body of Christ this past week?

The Lord has repeatedly brought me back to the real spiritual needs of those in the body for whom He has given me a great love.

MOTIVATE

** Having seen Paul being "Thankful for the Brethren" and "Longing for the Brethren", we now move into a more proactive posture for the apostle. He now sets his course for the high calling of "**Encouraging the Brethren**". As we enter into today's study, let's consider two questions.

- 1) Is God limited by our circumstances?
- 2) Are we limited by our circumstances?

Please open your Bibles to Philippians 1:12-18 as we observe the apostle in his quest to be "**Encouraging the Brethren**" by using the circumstances of his life, no matter how severe those circumstances might be.

Read passage (V.12-14) (V.15-18)

Opening Prayer

Encouraging the Brethren

INVESTIGATE

V.12 ** Paul has already been encouraging the Philippians thus far in his letter with his love for them, his thankfulness to God for them, and his joy and longing for them. At this point he is going to turn a corner, instead of talking about them, about whom does he begin to write?

Himself - Paul is going to use the details of his life and walk with Christ to encourage the hearts of the Philippians who had a tremendous concern for the apostle.

** What does he want them to know?

That his "circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel".

** What three words in that statement point out the fact that we do not know the role and impact of the events in our life each day, but God does?

"...**have turned out**..." While we might plan our strategies for each day, we have no idea what a day will produce - God on the other hand does! cf. Proverbs 16:9, Psalm 37:23-24

** What have we already learned about the specific circumstances in the life of Paul at the time of this writing?

He is in Rome, under house arrest around 62 A.D.

This was his first Roman imprisonment, after his third missionary journey. cf. Acts 28:16

** Even though Paul was in prison, in far away Rome, what word does he use to show his love for the Philippians in this verse?

"...brethren..." He will use that term eight times in this epistle, referring either to his beloved Philippians or the saints who are with him in Rome.

cf. Philippians 1:12, 14, 3:1, 13, 17, 4:1, 8, 21

** What might we be inclined to think would happen if the most effective evangelist of the day was thrown into a Roman prison?

It could silence the advance of the gospel!

** Was the gospel advancing prior to Paul's arrest?

Absolutely - this is after his third missionary journey. All of Asia-Minor had heard and there were churches established throughout the region.

** So, what unforeseeable event has "**turned out**" because of Paul's difficult circumstances?

There is now a "greater progress of the gospel".

As good as it had been going over the past twenty- five years, it was now going even better!

cf. Acts 28:30-31

V.13 ** How extensively was Paul able to reach out with the gospel of Jesus Christ while in a Roman prison?

His preaching had become "well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else".

** What was the praetorian guard, how big of an impact are we talking about?

This was the Imperial guard established by Augustus Caesar and numbered 9000 strong. You will remember from Acts 28:16 that Luke told us Paul was guarded by or chained to a soldier 24 hours a day. The question arises, "Who was who's prisoner?" Paul could not go anywhere, but neither could the Roman guard during his watch. He had to listen to Paul preach God's saving gospel. As one guard's shift would end, a new one would take his place and Paul would simply start all over.

** Besides the guards, who else heard the gospel?

"...everyone else..." This is referring to the household servants, cooks, gardeners, porters, doorkeepers - anyone serving in Nero's house. cf. Philippians 4:22

** What an amazing impact this little man had on the unbelievers around him, in seemingly undesirable circumstances. Why did Paul think he was in prison, what was his view of these circumstances?

"...my imprisonment in the cause of Christ..." He knew that his circumstances always had a heavenly purpose! He was encouraged and was willing to be "**Encouraging the Brethren**" as he shared God's view of this tremendous work. cf. Philippians 1:7, 2Timothy 2:8-10

V.14 ** What impact did Paul's faithful witness for Christ have upon the lives of the brethren there in Rome, how did they respond?

"...most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment..." They found themselves trusting in Christ because they were so encouraged by the example set by the apostle.

** What was the natural by-product of their increased trust in the Lord?

They had "far more courage to speak the word of God without fear".
cf. John 16:33, 2Corinthians 5:6-9, Romans 10:17

When men tried to silence the gospel by arresting the preacher, God used it to multiply the effort a thousand fold and more!

V.15 ** Paul said "most of the brethren" were speaking the word of God, was everyone involved in the preaching of God's saving truth being driven along by pure motives?

No, some were "...preaching Christ even from envy and strife..." True Christians, with the true message, had gotten caught up in a popularity contest with Paul. The church in Rome was established before Paul's arrival, and the leaders were losing the attention of the flock to Paul. They responded sinfully with "envy and strife".

** How does Paul describe the motive of those who were speaking in Spirit and in Truth?

They were men who spoke "...from good will..."

V.16 ** What was behind their "good will"?

The love of Christ, "the latter do it out of love".

** What did they know about Paul that would have been very encouraging to him?

They knew he had been "appointed for the defense of the gospel." cf. Acts 9:15, 23:11 It must have been a source of great encouragement for Paul to "know" what others knew about him and the faithfulness it produced in their lives!

V.17 ** What was the sinful attitude behind those preachers that "proclaimed Christ" from envy and strife?

Their heart was filled with "selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives..."

** Is it possible for a Christian to turn inward, becoming selfish and ambitious, so as to promote their own popularity, rather than the cause of Christ?

Of course! We are sinners who can easily feed our flesh, even when we know we should be starving it.
(Remember - Romans 13:14)

** What did they think their actions would accomplish?

They wanted to cause Paul "distress in [his] imprisonment." This is cold hearted self-centeredness, and it was being done by the Christian leaders no less. We need to view these despicable actions through godly eyes, lest we too be tempted. cf. Galatians 6:1

V.18 ** We need to remember that Paul is "**Encouraging the Brethren**" with this letter. How does he do that in the light of such sinful motives by others?

By bringing attention to the only thing that matters. "What then?" - Invites us to read the heart of Paul, what is important to him?

He has a truly joyful response to the proclamation of the truth, while at the same time he is not concerned with getting back at those who would harm him. It is very encouraging indeed to see someone selflessly committed to Jesus Christ and the proclamation of His truth!

** What is it that causes Paul to rejoice?

"...Christ is proclaimed..."

** Is Paul saying that he is rejoicing in the gospel being proclaimed, if it is truthful or not?

No - He is not referring to the message as being one of "pretense or truth", but the messenger.

** Can God use anything He wants to get His truth out?

Of course! All see - Numbers 22:21-35, Balaam would eventually be killed for being an unfaithful prophet. cf. Numbers 31:8

Well, if God can use a donkey, he can use a bunch of selfishly ambitious preachers.

** What is the two dimensional form of rejoicing, to which we see Paul commit?

Both - Now "...in this I rejoice..." **and** - Future "...and I will rejoice..."

Paul's readers (and us as well) should be very encouraged to see such a commitment to rejoice, even in the midst of very difficult circumstances. Does that challenge your own heart regarding the lack of joy you experience when life gets hard?

EXTRICATE

** Was God limited by Paul's circumstances?

No - He planned them! V.12 "greater progress", and V.18 "Christ proclaimed".
Acts 28:31 "unhindered".

DELINEATE

** Was Paul limited by his circumstances?

Not at all! V.13 - He reached thousands from inside his prison confinement, V.14 while at the same time was able to be "**Encouraging the Brethren**" with his gracious example.

EVALUATE

** What were some examples in our passage for today, that would help us to better view our circumstances?

V.12 Encourage other Christians by telling what God has done in our life

V.13 in the cause of Christ

V.14 trust more when we see a godly example

V.16 love and support based on the knowledge of our fellow Christian's lifestyle

V.18 rejoice because "Christ is proclaimed" through our circumstances.

ACTIVATE

** Are you willing to be "**Encouraging the Brethren**" by your faithfulness to Christ through every circumstance He brings your way? To God be the glory!

Closing prayer