

Proclaimers of the Gospel (3)

Introduction (Text: Philippians 1:12-18)

- A. Paul's vocational passion is stated with bell-ringing joy and trumpet like clarity in verse 18: **“But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.”**
- B. Paul's friends are worried about him. He is in prison and soon must face trial. **They are naturally concerned about the outcome, knowing all too well that death may be Rome's judgment on him. In his effort to reassure them, Paul laid down, perhaps inadvertently, three great principles. (1) We can proclaim the gospel anywhere. (2) We are to proclaim the gospel everywhere. (3) When the gospel is proclaimed, the Spirit guarantees a harvest.**

#1: *We Can Proclaim the Gospel Anywhere*

- A. **Paul was in prison, but he did not allow this to hinder his missionary work.** In fact, his imprisonment had **“actually served to advance the gospel”** (Verse 12).
- B. Paul portrayed the results of his imprisonment, thus proving that the gospel can be proclaimed anywhere. **Verse 13** shows the impact upon those outside the Christian community. **He witnessed to the soldiers who guarded him. Through them the word had spread to the whole palace guard that he was in prison not because he was a criminal but because he was a Christian.**
- C. **Verse 14 shows the impact upon those within the Christian community.** Because Paul remained faithful to Christ, and continued to witness joyfully despite the awfulness of his circumstance, the other Christians in Rome **“have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear”** (verse 14). Paul was, also, encouraging Christians to be bold.

#2: *We Are to Proclaim the Gospel Everywhere*

- A. **Whether through Paul, a prisoner, or the guards, or the servants in Caesar's household, or the ordinary Roman citizens, the gospel was to be proclaimed everywhere.**

B. Note:

- **Example #1: Tony and Sonia Bratton** (One Nation Under God—in a National Forest in Oregon—out from Eugene, Or.)
- **Example #2: 21 years in prison here and in the Connally unit in Kennedy, Tx.**-(Baptisms from the ADSEG)

- **Example #3:** Bus program in South Houston. (“I leave religion to my wife and children”)

#3: *The Spirit Guarantees the Harvest*

A. Paul’s presence in Rome, his imprisonment, and his proclamation of the gospel affected people—interestingly, the Christians—in various ways.

- The members of the church might have taken his imprisonment as a signal for them to stay quiet, to do nothing that would attract the attention of the authorities.
- **This may have been the case with a few; but most of them gained courage and confidence and began proclaiming the word with fresh vigor.**

B. Paul’s honesty is so refreshing. He recognized and recorded the fact that some Christians were prompted by good will towards him and were challenged to be as faithful as he.

C. **Others were interested in success for its own sake.** Jealous of Paul, they were determined to show that they could be successful and that the church could prosper without him. **How “human” the church, then as now!** Divisive?

D. So there was strife and envy. As disappointed in that as Paul was, he was undaunted in his belief that even confused and impure motives do not annul the power of the gospel. **When Christ is proclaimed, the Spirit guarantees the increase.**

#4: *The Gospel Through the Person (Philippians 1:19-30)*

Note: The confidence of Paul in the gospel, expressed in this passage, shines like the noonday sun. Despite the fact that he is shackled because of the gospel, his hope is unshaken (verse 19).

The **NEB** translates a portion of **verse 20** in this fashion: **“the greatness of Christ will shine out clearly in my person, whether through my life or through my death.” This is an ultimate truth to be marked in red—the gospel is communicated through the person.** Note the way Paul underscores this truth throughout the passage, not only by reference to himself, but by his call to us.

A. *To Live Is Christ (Philippians 1:21-26)*

- **Verses 21-26** form one of these marvelous passages in which Paul opens the door of his innermost being and invites us in to visit. Though addressing his readers, Paul is talking to himself, working out his feelings as he shares his unedited thoughts.
- **He is ambiguous in his desires. Oh, for the transparency of commitment and hope that will enable us to struggle honestly and openly with our deep longings and desires. I want to go and be with Christ, he says; what joy**

that would be. Yet, what about the fruit of my labor? I'm hard-pressed to decide whether I want to go and be with Christ or stay with you.

- How precious and revealing. Interwoven in the struggle is one of the boldest of Paul's claims: **"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die gain"** (v. 21). Isn't that the highest, clearest point to which our faith can take us? When we arrive at that juncture of our spiritual pilgrimage, we will then be able to live with joyful self-giving abandon, welcoming every bit of life, and without fear of death. For the Christian the only death that matters is the one we die when we are **"baptized into the death of Christ"** (Romans 6:3).

B. *Conduct Worthy of the Gospel*

- **Paul never allowed anyone to get away from the ethical/moral demands of a life in Christ.** The slurring comment about the man who was *"so heavenly minded that he was no earthly good"* could never be made of Paul, not of any Christian whose perspective is clear. **Our arena of life is the practical everyday sphere where we live—our home, job, school, church, neighborhood—and in that arena, our conduct must be worthy of the gospel.**
- **"...conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"** (v. 27). Paul is saying, **"Live your citizen-life."** **You are a Christian; your citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).** The Philippians could easily identify with Paul's image. Philippi was a colony of the Roman Empire.
- Every Roman colony was a little of Rome planted in distant settings throughout the world. **A Roman citizen, no matter where he was, never forgot that he was a Roman. So the Philippian Christians understood Paul's word.** There are common principles and actions that are to characterize our life as citizens of the kingdom.
- **"Stand firm."** How wishy-washy are we in our convictions? How are our convictions shaped? What influence does our environment, our current circle of friends, the social standards of our day have upon our convictions?
- **"Striving together with one accord for the faith of the gospel."** **Am I a part of a local church that is driven by a passion for the faith of the gospel which is a compassion for souls—"that none should perish but all come to a new life in Christ."** If not, what am I doing to infuse that fire of passion into our citizen-life? **When did I last expend significant energy, make any sacrifice, invest time and talent to strive with one mind with my brothers and sisters for the faith of the gospel?**

C. *Believing and Suffering*

- The cross is at the center of the Christian life—not just Golgotha's cross, though that is our salvation, but the Cross as a way of life. **Prior to Golgotha, Jesus suffered persecution, rejection, hostility, and misunderstanding. He**

promised His followers nothing less in their ministry in His name: (John 16:33).

- **Paul, in prison and suffering, has a vision of the victorious Christ, so he can talk about being granted the privilege of suffering.** No doubt he remembered Jesus' beatitude: **(Matthew 5:10-11)**. He was also remembering his call. Had Ananias told him what the Lord had said to him about Paul? **(Acts 9:15-16)**.
- **Because of the love Paul received from the cross, he was also to love, in spite of the cost. It costs to love, in any time, in any place. The costs may not be chains or death, but they are no less real.**

Conclusion

- A. The word of Paul for us here is that the love of Christ on the cross is both the means of our salvation and the mandate for our ministry.** We are called to be faithful to Christ, to love with His unlimited giving and forgiving love—and that often requires suffering. We are to count such suffering a privilege.
- B. It is interesting, and worth a long look, that Paul put believing and suffering together in verse 29.** Here is the most challenging truth of this particular passage. Who we are is determined by whom and what we trust. Our identity is formed and transformed by our network of trusts. **Believing in Christ calls for a reconfiguration, a reformation of the self. Christian “believers” are not persons who major in believing, who delight in correct doctrine and systematic propositions.**
- C. Rather, they are persons who entrust themselves to Him whom the gospel proclaims as Lord and seek to live as worthy citizens of His kingdom by acting and relating as the gospel calls us and if we live it, then we will suffer.**