

PHILIPPIANS 1

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:1-2).

Paul's persistent trust in "the ending" radically altered his end. Mimic Paul's trust and these things will become true of you:

1. You will become Jesus' eager servant, not just one who hung around Him, whatever fallen life throws in front of you.
2. You will pursue others to lead them into the favor of God that will minister peace to them.
 - a. They will feel value and dignity though life strips them of it!
 - b. They will find forgiveness and acceptance though shame condemns them!
 - c. They will know they belong, even in the face of devastating rejection!
 - d. They will gain wisdom, even when they've made fools of themselves!

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-7

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel (Philippians 1:3-7).

In following Jesus through various circumstances, he will remind his disciples to feel the significance of:

- relationships with other believers.
- trusting in God's process with the end in sight.
- the mission and work of the gospel.

1. Paul's normal pattern is to call himself an "apostle" but here in Philippians he doesn't. Why not? How does this connect with what he says in Philippians 2:3-5?

2. What words stick out to you as you read this passage and why?

3. Why is Paul making a prayer with joy? When is the last time you made a prayer with joy and what were the circumstances surrounding it?

4. What is the good work that Christ is bringing to completion? Is it your happiness? A good retirement account? Stability in life?

5. How does verse six instruct our perspective on the various events/circumstances surrounding our lives? Do you ever doubt its truth?

PHILIPPIANS 1:8-9

For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment (Philippians 1:8-9).

Paul's words show that robust friendships can be built in churches. They sprout among people in whom two things are increasing and overflowing.

- Knowledge - of God, of self and of each other. We love others skillfully only by knowing more about God's story and their stories.
- Discernment - able to see in wreckage what will restore and redeem. We love others more skillfully as we discern:
 - significant scar that limit their trust in God and increase their vulnerability to evil.
 - a quest to be loved that led to unlovable behavior in them.
 - significant truths from God's story that will radically alter what remains to be written in their stories.
 - an approach to them, then word, then on that reaches their hearts.

Know this. Such skill in loving others will produce a string of great results in us.

1. In verse nine Paul prays that the people's love would be well-supplied with two things. What are those two things? How do you think these are supplied to us?

2. What things did you have to learn about your wife in order to love her well? Or, what things did you NOT know about her that, when you learned them, helped you love her better? How about your children?

3. What are some of examples of things we might come to know about others? What kinds of things might we discern in them? What kinds of things must you “discern” in those you love that will help you do the right thing at the right time?

4. In verses 10-11 Paul gives some results that will come about if our love is shaped more by these two things. Think about what these are and their significance, then record your thoughts.

5. What kinds of things do you watch for in people to try to discern what the Lord might want to accomplish in them through you?

PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:9-11).

Robust friendships can be built in churches, among people increasing in knowledge and discernment. Such skill in loving others will produce a string of great results in us:

We have in view what is truly essential in the midst of various circumstances.

- We operate in the realm of pure motives: forgiveness, repentance and correction, rather than shame, hiddenness, bitterness, and insecurity.
- We are filled with blessing: the fruit of righteousness.
- We have an increasing awareness of how much credit God deserves for the change in our hearts.
- Are we praying this way about our relationships?

1. How does this prayer of Paul's (verses 9-11) compare with our own prayers for each other?

2. What does it mean to "approve what is excellent" (or "discern what is superior")? In what areas of life do you need to grow in discernment of what is best?

3. Do you know of someone that you would say is "filled with the fruit of righteousness"? What is this person like? Do you think its possible for you to be filled with the fruit of righteousness?

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18A

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice (Philippians 1:12-18a).

When we embrace in faith and are bound to the gospel in the midst of suffering, we receive kingdom perspective, kingdom transformation and kingdom power. The gospel advances!

Our suffering exposes our thinking and priorities. The invitation is to make the gospel of King Jesus and its advancement our utmost joy. The gospel redefines our understanding and practice of our everyday life.

1. In the last sermon, we talked about the phrase “approve what is excellent” as meaning: keeping in mind what is essential. How does Paul demonstrate that discernment here in these verses? Another way of asking this is: what are his priorities?
2. Paul says that his imprisonment is for Christ. Have you ever experienced how something difficult you’ve endured has helped someone else out?
3. In what situation or in what ways do you need to increase in boldness for Christ or change how you’re living so as to make Christ more evident?
4. Is Paul just bragging or articulating some wishful thinking? Why does he want the Philippians to know these things about his life?

PHILIPPIANS 1:18B-26

Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again (Philippians 1:18b-26).

A singular purpose rules us: to magnify Christ. Through our death: entering the experience of the full glory of Christ. Through our life: laboring for our master.

- We hope in eventual deliverance.
- We are consistent and enduring.
- We openly speak with others about Jesus.
- We contribute to the progress of others.

1. Through what means will Paul's "deliverance" come? What does that say about what kind of people we need to be in our lives?

2. Let's be careful with our understanding of "fruitful labor." We can tend to read American productiveness into this verse, rather than gospel productiveness. If we desire to be with Christ and if that's truly "better" (verse 23) then why not just commit suicide to be with Jesus? What would you tell someone who is in a nursing home and seemingly "unproductive" in the work of the kingdom?

3. What are you hoping is said about you when you die? How would your death be "gain"? How will Christ be honored in your death?

PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have (Philippians 1:27-30).

Because of all that Jesus has accomplished,

- Live in a way that reflects your belonging to Him.
- Stand firm in the Spirit.
- Battle for the mission as one person, fully unified as a church.

Don't be intimidated and run off course. Rest/Trust in God's gracious plan of advancing the gospel through suffering.

1. Verse 27 has the first direct command given in this letter. What does it mean to have your life be "worthy of the gospel of Christ"? In which setting is this most difficult for you?
2. When is a time in your life where you felt side by side with other believers?
3. Why is it hard for Christians to be unified and strive together?
4. In your own life, what are the principles for which, or who are the people for whom, you would willingly die? Would you willingly suffer for Christ? Why is it that sometimes God calls Christians to suffer?