

# Philippians 1:12–18

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] 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 goodwill. 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. This is the word of the Lord.

Good morning, Christ Church. Good to be with you today. And I would be remiss to not extend just a special welcome to Kristen. We are privileged to have you here. We know that you labor on the other side of the world, and it is our privilege to play a small part in that. And we're thrilled to hear from you personally and look forward to all that God's going to continue to do in Turkey through your ministry. Not only that, but it would be remiss to not mention that I saw, but haven't been able to say hello yet to Arthur and Shirley Jackson. I think they are here somewhere. Arthur, of course, pastored. How you doing, retired dear friend?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. He's still laboring for Christ, but he and I were in the harness together here for 10 years. Shirley, it's wonderful to see you. So grateful you're here. And also Keith Lindsey. Keith went through the fire. Yeah, yeah. Amen. It's his first week back, about 70 weeks, but you all know, as a member of our church, he told me he was born through water, and then in his inebriated days, came through the flood, and then literally just now passed through the fire. But the Lord has spared your life, my dear friend, and it's good to have you here today. Good to have everybody. It's almost like a picture in front of me this morning.

I wonder what it would be like if the early church had the iPhone complete with the camera, capable of taking that selfie at strategic moments. If they did, I'd long for someone to show me the photo of the Philippian congregation on the day that Paul and Timothy were setting out from them with the gospel, they now having entered into partnership with them. Partnership, both intimacy of spirit and investment of funds that the gospel would be carried from Philippi to the ends of the earth. We've already seen it. Philippi was a congregation that pleased God by remaining in partnership with Christ. Can you see the picture? I've tried to envision it this week. There's Paul. They probably would have put him in the middle. This ever-speaking evangelist, a Jew. Next to him, probably, somebody put his young protege, Timothy. Timothy, a young man, mixed race, given the marriage of his parents. There he is. Can you see him? Young, eager for ministry, half Jew, half Greek. Looking at the photo on the phone, you wouldn't miss the best-dressed woman in the church in Philippi. She was wealthy. Her name was Lydia. She was converted.

She was converted along a Riverside prayer meeting. She was an international businesswoman, a maker of fine fabrics. Perhaps in the photo, although not observed at first, you would then see the unnamed slave girl, the one who was bought, manipulated by others for their own welfare, not hers, only recently released from her vocation as a palm reader, and now a founding member in that congregation, wondering, perhaps, now that I've given up my livelihood, how will my life go on? And then, with that chiseled look, most likely retired from the Roman military in that colony of Philippi, where he was a citizen of the empire, the jailer, the jailer himself, who, along with his family, had come to know Christ when the church at

[ 5 : 5 2 ] Philippi was planted. Can you imagine the photo of that group and others unknown to us, unnamed, sending Paul and Timothy on their way? You might wish that you could put yourself in that photo. You might think that is the kind of church I want to be a member of a member of a member of a church that pleases God by remaining in partnership with him, and the expression of it

is diverse as the world in which Philippi had found itself. You might call it the platonic church family photo.

That said, you and I would be wrong to think that the church that pleases God by remaining in partnership with him isn't one of those great problems. In fact, Paul, in this letter, and he praised them for their partnership with him, verses three to eight, chapter one, having prayed for their progress, chapter one, verses nine to 11, now is prepared to indicate his present position. And that's our text today.

And we find Paul in prison. He hinted at it back in chapter one, verse five, where they had, he recalled his help to them in prison. But now in chapter 12, he says, verse 12, he says, I want you to know what's happened to me. And in verse 13, it's clear that what's happened to him is problematic. It's imprisonment. In fact, as we go through the letter this summer, the problems of a gospel partnership church seem to be multivariegated. There's going to be problems by the resistance of those who in Philippi don't want their witness to take root in their own community. There's going to be problems on the inside in regard to the grumbling and disputing that he wishes and hopes they'll put to rest. There's going to be problems when they send someone to the mission field on an errand like Epaphroditus, and they nearly wind up dead. There's going to be problems when Yodia and Syntyche are trying to agree on something, while we know we shouldn't be centered on the partnership of the gospel. All of these problems are part of the family portrait. And that ought to clear up your expectation for our future. So if you had seen that picture, and you had said to one of those founding members, tell me, tell me, what did you learn from Paul? What lesson did you learn on grass before you ever sat under stained glass? Tell me what kept your local fellowship together? Our text provides the following answer. You ready? Write it down. Here's the argument. So long as the gospel is advanced, advancing, you'll find us rejoicing. I like the way that sounds. I'm going to repeat it again, because it's not only the argument of the text, it's the one thing I want to persuade you of from it today. Christ Church Chicago, as long as the gospel is advancing, you'll find us rejoicing.

That's the way the text book ends, isn't it? Let me tell you what has happened to me. Imprisoned. But by the end, in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice. Two proofs, two proofs that held that congregation together in the midst of the problems they encountered as a consequence of their partnership with Paul. First proof, verse 13. Yes, Paul's in prison. Here it is. But that's how outsiders came to hear the word of Christ. Take a look at it with me. So that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

[ 10 : 36 ] Paul's problem of imprisonment advanced the gospel. Others, outsiders, are now hearing the word about Christ. Let me just sit on that for a minute. It says here the imperial guard, the word here about a praetorium, the Roman praetorium, is indicative of its location. The Roman praetor would have been the military governor-like individual over a region. And only those cities had an imperial guard, a praetorium guard. And so we know there was one in Jerusalem. We know there was one in Caesarea. It's almost entirely universally held that Paul's in the one in Rome. That he is in Rome under Nero. Indeed, if you look back through your booklet at chapter 4, verse 22, he's going to give greetings from those who are in the household of Caesar himself. So Paul is in the worst of all places. He is under the thumb of Nero in imprisonment. But notice what he says. In this way, the fact that what I am doing for Christ has become known to the whole imperial guard. Notice, and to all the rest, all my cellmates, he says.

Notice, everyone else who is aware of my situation. There are some people here today, brothers in Christ, who know what it's like to be on the other side of the jail cell. There are those who are here in our midst who have witnessed the propagation of the gospel through the problematic confinement of a prisoner. I had the unique privilege of a lifetime to be in Florida one day, given that one of the medium security prisons was offering the Simeon course on preaching to inmates. And I relinquished all my goods at the door and went all the way to the back and in the pods and sat with men who were preaching and proclaiming the gospel from that very vantage point.

I have seen a little baby blow up pool and an inmate seated and gone under as he has come to faith.

Paul is saying that the problems of imprisonment are nothing to the productive advancement of the gospel.

And in that, I rejoice. So long as the gospel is advancing, you'll find us what? Rejoicing. You'll find us rejoicing.

[14:00] What about your hardship? I wonder sometimes how soft we're becoming. Could it be that a little rain or mud underfoot on a Sunday morning might keep you from gathering in the midst of the assembly?

Are we really, really wondering whether we're ready for the things that are going to be coming, for problems that are really problems, because of a partnership with the gospel, Paul says, you can put me in jail, but the word of God is not bound.

Outsiders coming to hear the word of Christ through Paul's imprisonment is a proof that so long as the gospel is advancing, you'll find us rejoicing.

Two, the second proof is in verse 14. Not only are outsiders coming to hear the word of Christ, but insiders are much more confident to boldly speak the word of Christ.

Look at it with me. Put your eyes on it. And most of the brothers, notice not all, most, most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

[15:23] Fear. What Paul is relaying to you and to me is not only did he learn, not only did he learn the principle that his present circumstances need to be interpreted in light of an eternal priority, the proclamation of the gospel, but as he learned it, it put confidence in men and women who began to learn that in their present circumstances, they had to interpret that in light of the gospel.

And so the priority of the word going forth in Philippi began to elevate. And look, they began to become more confident. I love that word. It says they were much more bold.

I love the two words in front of bold, much more bold. And the last phrase, without fear.

Fearlessness marked this congregation.

Think of it. The effect of opposition is empowerment for proclamation. That the natural inclination of a threat of opposition is to make you fearful and not proclaim Jesus.

Jesus. The name of Jesus. Jesus. My Jesus. Our Jesus. On our lips. To those that we live in and among.

[17:05] I remember when I was a senior in high school. It wasn't because of any academic prowess. Believe me, you know me well enough to know that. But I had been voted to give the address at our commencement.

Well, they knew I was a Christian because I had converted to Christ about a year before. The faculty knew that I was going to talk about Jesus. My Jesus. And they actually began to go to the administration to say, we cannot allow Helm to speak at the public high school graduation because we're going to hear about his Jesus.

The principal said, well, there's not much I can do. He was voted in. So my classmates came to me, many of them. And they said, you know, Dave, we put up with you for a year now, but you need to know this.

When you mention Jesus, there's a number of us that are committed to standing and walking out of our own graduation. So I had that kind of stuff made me fearful.

And I waited a bit in the talk. I didn't come right out with it. But come the home stretch, I talked about Jesus. My Jesus.

[18:27] And that there was no way to walk humbly or to execute mercy or to do justice unless you're doing it in relationship to your God. Through whom we know how to do it through his son, Jesus.

I still have the old reel to reel tape today. And on the tape, you can hear because it was an old wood balcony, bleacher gym. You can hear bang, bang, bang, bang.

As some people, parents exited when they heard about Jesus. Interestingly, not one classmate got up and left.

I guess they wanted that diploma more than they wanted their threats on me to displace my testimony to them.

How about you? How about you, insider? How about you, member of Christ's church? How about you, brand new Christian in our midst?

[19:32] Are you willing? Do you have greater confidence? Don't you have greater confidence when somebody gets it done and then you're able to follow them and do it? That's the way it works.

One of my favorite photos that I have is the night of my high school graduation. Me and three friends, Christian friends who are in the photo and six freshmen in high school boys who had come to Christ and many of them still living for Christ now decades later.

They stood with the gospel then. They stand in the gospel now and they receive confidence because somebody was willing to stand up and speak the name of Jesus without fear. So long as the gospel is advancing, you'll find us rejoicing. Proof? Outsiders come to hear the word of Christ in that way.

Insiders are more confident to boldly speak the word of Christ in that way. Notice the caveat of verses 15 to 17.

[ 20 : 43 ] Even when there is increased proclamation, it is not without problems. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others goodwill.

The latter do it out of love, knowing that I'm put here as a defense for the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, but thinking to inflict me in my imprisonment. Here you have an amplification on his second proof. I can rejoice because insiders, more people are speaking the name of Christ.

And it's set out by way of contrast. Notice the two buts. Some out of envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. Verse 17. Some out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me.

This contrast says that even when the proclamation of God's word is increasing, it will increase with problems attended to it. And here the problems were that of motivation.

[ 21 : 51 ] There were messed up motives in regard to some of the brothers who were preaching Christ. Well, do you know what those motives were?

Do you know what they were after? First Thessalonians. If you have it on your phone or you carried the Bible with you, it'd be worth looking at. Because there's a word in our text down here in verse 18, pretense.

That is used in 1 Thessalonians 2, 5. When we read pretext. And it actually concerns Paul's ministry in Philippi and the nature of the mixed motivation.

So let me read it to you. 1 Thessalonians 2, 1 to 5. For you yourselves know brothers that are coming to you is not in vain. Remember, this is the congregation that got planted immediately after the family photo was taken and he left from Philippi to go to Thessalonica.

But though we had already suffered and been sufficiently shamelessly treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. Notice, the gospel is going in the midst of conflict.

[ 23 : 06 ] For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak. Not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts.

For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed. God is witness, nor did we seek glory from people. There's the triad of mixed motivation.

Verse 4, pleasing men. Verse 5, money grabbing. Verse 6, glory seeking.

So people began to preach the gospel, but these were men pleasing, money grabbing, glory seeking ministers. They were in it for themselves.

Paul is now in jail, and he's seeing what's going on on the outside, and he's hearing, man, you don't believe these guys are trying to take you out.

[ 24 : 13 ] And what does he say? A wonderful opening line of verse 18. What then? T-Gar.

You know I don't have any tattoos yet. But you need to know that this is the one I'm getting when I'm fed up with it all and finally to go get one.

I know you get one to celebrate certain things, but if Helm ever comes in with a tattoo, it's going to say T-Gar. I'm not sure where. But it's this phrase.

What then? Whatever. A sense of resignation, but a sense of rejoicing that the word's going forward. Paul asks this question, and he basically says, even though outsiders are coming to hear the word of Christ, even when insiders are more confident to speak the word of Christ, even when motivations are messed up, nevertheless, only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed.

That's the principle. He learned to interpret his present imprisonment in light of his eternal priority.

The outcome then is this for Paul, and it needs to be this for us.

[ 25 : 48 ] Hey, you take a family photo of Christ Church Chicago? As long as the word's getting out, as long as the brothers are speaking out, and it don't matter to me if the agitators are on us because they're not going to bring me out.

As long as Christ is proclaimed, I will what? Rejoice. Yeah, he says it again.

Yes, and I will rejoice. Now, let me say a word about rejoicing, and I'm done. Joy is a fleeting, temporal emotion.

Rejoicing is a considered, fixed state of mind. Joy is an emotion.

Rejoicing is a decided state of mind. Joy happens when you attend a wedding. Rejoicing happens when you're out of your chair and you join the party on the dance floor.

[ 26 : 58 ] Now, I know the older you get, the more likely you are to sit, which is an indication that you're fine to have the emotion of joy for them. But rejoicing is the frame of mind that enters into it.

Joy makes you happy. Rejoicing makes you hop. It makes you move. It is the elation of getting a job is like joy.

But the acceptance of the commute necessary to sustain it, that's rejoicing. Let me tell you, this is the way it works. To sing happy birthday to someone is joy.

To purchase the gift that is perfectly suited for that person on their day, that's rejoicing. And Paul is saying, in any situation, I move beyond my emotive circumstantial sense to that fixed state of mind that is going to rejoice.

Joy is like piglet walking around the bush once for a heffalump. Rejoicing is like walking around it and around it and around it.

[ 28 : 12 ] It's saying, I am going to stay in this frame of mind. Paul says, that's why he says at the very end there, and again, I will rejoice.

Come hell or high water, and I expect both in our future.

As long as the gospel is making headway, you're going to find me happy. If the gospel makes progress, we will bear up under any persecution.

If the name of Jesus is going forward, then I can handle any misfortune. The frightening part of the story is this.

That God uses persecution to further the progress of the gospel. The church has always taken ground when it's been underweight.

[ 29 : 30 ] The church in Philippi was planted amidst Paul being in prison.

Isn't that the irony of it all? I can imagine talking to the Philippian jailer, reading this in church on Sunday. There's Paul. He's at it again. He's over in jail, this time Rome.

You know what? I became a Christian when Paul was in jail here. The church is birthed as it embraces persecution. Fear not, dear brother, dear sister.

Problems lie ahead for us on every single front. But so long as the gospel is advancing, what?

You'll find us rejoicing. As long as the gospel is advancing, you'll find us rejoicing. Because we have learned the Pauline principle to interpret our present circumstances in light of the eternal priority.

[ 30 : 36 ] Soon, 10 years from now, maybe someone will come up to you and say, look at this photo I found of you. You were there on the day that Christ Church first set up shop in a building that the Lord had provided.

It looks like a nice picture. People from all different walks of life. I guess you really had it together, didn't you? I guess you had it made. I guess things went well for you, didn't you?

And then you would say, no, no, no, no. There are problems on every front. But we knew it was coming. And so long as that gospel is advancing, you're going to find us rejoicing.

Our Heavenly Father, what a wonderful city you've given us. I think of the citizenry of our South Side.

So many who love our Lord. So many more eager and able to share the name of Jesus than we are.

[ 31 : 45 ] May the difficulties of our brothers only increase confidence in ourselves to proclaim the name of Christ. Lord, on the day that we shut it down and we explain to others what has happened to us.

May we close that it all has been served to advance the gospel. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen.