

Unstoppable Good News

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[0 : 00] Our sermon is coming from the section we read in Philippians. So if you have your physical Bibles, feel free to open them to Philippians 1, 12 through 18.

I will read it again because it's six verses long. 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 more 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 here for the defence of the gospel.

The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, but thinking to inflict me and my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

[1 : 13] Let's pray before we turn to the word of the Lord. Dear God, we come before you as your children. We pray that your word, which is the living truth, changes our hearts and our souls.

We pray that we are open to your word affecting us, and we pray that you are glorified, that Christ is glorified in everything we do here today. We pray all these things in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

One feature I appreciate about my email application on my phone is that it filters emails into focused or other mail.

Then also there's the infamous junk folder. It works pretty well, apart from the odd important email falling into the ether of junk. My other junk folders are packed with emails entitled, congratulations, or you've been selected.

99% of these being nuisance and spam. No wonder people can look at us vacantly when we use the phrase, the good news of Christ.

[2 : 30] Having been bombarded for numbers of years for their entire lifetime, imitations of good news, it can be a leap to believe what we have is good and not just junk mail.

The good news we have is real. The good news we do have is real. Paul has an evangelist's heart for his church plant and for his people.

He begins his letter with affection for them, and the whole correspondence is devoted to the praise of Christ, the good news that he preaches, and the perseverance of the saints towards glory.

Paul is truly concerned with reassuring the believers about the good news is still going forth despite his imprisonment.

His very first phrase, I want you to know, brothers, in verse 12. It's not merely concern as we would understand mild concern. That would be to underestimate its importance.

[3 : 36] He uses these form of words elsewhere, and it always precedes important information. Which is of the utmost to the apostle. This is clearly shown in 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 13, when he's battling for the saints' assurance of faith.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. But here in this letter to the church in Philippi, Paul's emphasis is the gospel is as strong as ever.

The good news has not been extinguished, however hard the powers of the prince of this world would try and smother that truth. We will look at this passage under three headings.

First, unstoppable good news. Second, uplifted by the good news. And third and finally, unrestrained good news.

First, unstoppable good news. From verses 12 and 13. What's unstoppable?

[5 : 00] Unstoppable. I did a quick internet search for what the news was saying was unstoppable recently. It said, The unstoppable rise of a social media star I promise I have never heard of.

The unstoppable rise of quote unquote dad TV on Amazon Prime. The latest unstoppable stock that will fly off the stock market.

And Rafael Nadal is unstoppable. Despite the fact that he has lost 41 times in his tennis career. Whilst impressive, not unstoppable.

The world often uses this term as hyperbole. An exaggeration device. However, here, Paul isn't using hyperbole.

He knows the true impact of Christ's transforming work. What of Paul? How has he himself changed? After his conversion on the road to Damascus.

[6 : 03] We can see the impact and how he reacts. From Acts 9, 26 through 30. And when he came to Jerusalem. He attempted to join the disciples.

And they were all afraid of him. For they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And declared to them. How on the road he had seen the Lord. Who had spoke to him. And how at Damascus he had preached boldly. In the name of Jesus. So that he went in and out among them at Jerusalem. Preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.

For he spoke and disputed with the illness. But they were seeking to kill him. And when the brothers learned this. They brought him to Caesarea. And sent him off to Tarsus.

Also. From 2nd Corinthians 12 verse 7. The real personal impact on his life. Is evident. For his love. For the transforming Christ.

[7 : 01] So. To keep me from being conceited. Of the surpassing greatness of revelations. A thorn was given me in the flesh.

A messenger of Satan to harass me. To keep me from being conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this. That it should leave me. But he said to me.

My grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness. So that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

For the sake of Christ then. I am content with weakness. Insults. Hardships. Persecutions. And calamities. For when I am weak. Then I am strong.

This Christ. Who has transformed Paul. Is his motivation to go forth. And tell others. About the hope. That is within him. Why is the good news.

[8 : 01] Truly unstoppable. In this passage. It's a real evangelistic mission. The imperial guard. Refers to the Praetorian guard. In the Roman world.

It's a SAS of its day. A seal squad for our American friends. But why is it an evangelistic mission? Look to Paul's words. In verse 13.

Throughout the whole. Imperial guard. So the size of a cohort. Varied. Depending on what emperor was in charge at the time.

However. A company ranged from at least 800. To 1,500 men. At least. At its very smallest. At least.

Seven times the size of our church. At least. You could end up standing. Next to a soul in heaven. Who was among these first exposed.

[8 : 58] To the good news. Through Paul's imprisonment. Standing next to a member of the imperial guard. Can you imagine it? Better yet. A soul.

That is saved through the testimony. Of one of these guards. Almost half the world's population. Exists in India. And China today. Two places where the gospel.

Is moving. Unstoppably. In spite of fierce opposition. However. When it comes to this passage. Let me be careful. The Bible.

The Bible. Does not claim. That there were so many. Added to the church. Directly from this encounter. It doesn't have the same inference. As the greatest evangelistic event.

In Nineveh. Or that of Pentecost. But Paul mentions it. It's a way. In which Christ. Is seen through his imprisonment. Whether there are any.

[9 : 52] Or many converts. Numbers. Were not Paul's concern. His chief concern. Was that Christ was proclaimed. And.

Importantly. That the Philippians knew it. Secondly. Uplifted in the good news. Being uplifted.

Here's a moment. For confession. I am a football fan. That is not my confession. The confession is.

And I don't know. If any of you. Have watched these on YouTube. But there are. A series of videos. On YouTube. Which combine. Famous sporting events. And Celine Dion song. My heart will go on. I won't sing. But there's always. A build up. To. Either. A last minute goal. Being scored.

[10:48] Or. A basket. And. After the seconds. Have run out. And the music's building up. And then. When these things happen. There's a key change. And. Everyone's celebrating.

But it very much does. Fall into. Guilty pleasures. For me. That combination. Of using. Musical key changes. That evoke.

A musical. Emotional response. And sporting achievement. That does the same. Is naturally uplifting. To our psychology. The Roman believers.

Were not uplifted. By music. Or sporting achievement. But by Paul's. Imprisonment. And his perseverance. Drawing our attention.

To verse 14. And most of the brothers. Having become confident. In the Lord. By my imprisonment. Are much more bold. To speak the word.

[11:42] Without fear. For writing. Essays and sermons. I have a software. That the government. Has generously provided me. Called Grammarly. It highlights.

All my spelling errors. It suggests. It's reworking. Clumsy sentences. And actually. Automatically applies. Craig punctuation. To any of my work. It massively.

Reduces. The proofreading. Workloads. Of my long. Suffering wife. This semester. Is definitely. Less of a stream. But why. Did I mention that? Because this software.

Highlights. How much of an expert. Paul is. With his language. Often now. When I copy scripture. Into a word document. A wee line. Will appear. At different parts.

Of verses. However. My software. On this occasion. Doesn't like the phrase. More bold. And attempts. To change it. To a more concise. Boulder.

[12:39] Almost like. The coding software. Hasn't taken on. The warning. About changing scripture. Found in Deuteronomy 4. Or Revelation 22. Being concise. Is not always.

An improvement. To make that change. Truly. Does change. The emphasis. Completely. To say. And this would be. The change. And most of the brothers.

Have become. Confident. In the Lord. By my imprisonment. Are much bolder. To speak without fear. The word. Without fear. It's true. And it's fine.

But it actually. Loses the emphasis. Paul has already said. The brothers have become. More confident. So he isn't just. Doubling down. On this idea.

Of confidence. By saying. They are bold. But it's communicating. In which way. This is coming about. To say. And this is what it was. And most of the brothers.

[13:34] Having become. More confident. In the Lord. By my imprisonment. Are much more bold. To speak the word. Without fear. It's like my boy. I will never.

Understand. How he regulates. Time. In his head. He often uses. These hand gestures. That make sense. To him. But make no sense.

To me. Whatsoever. Is this party. This far away. Or this far away. He asks me. To put. A number on it. But I can't regulate.

How he's understanding that. But in this passage. You can almost. See Paul. Using such gestures. When explaining this. Not. Much bolder.

But much bolder. The emphasis. Being on the much. For grammarly. To remove it. Would be to expel. The divinely applied. Emphasis.

[14:31] There's also. An interesting. Cultural question. Raised by this verse. As well. What does this earth say? The brothers. Are much bolder. To speak.

Without fear. They are encouraged. To spread. The good news. First. The imperial guard. Have heard it. Then. The brothers.

In Rome. Are emboldened. To tell. All they have. About the truth. Of the salvation. Through Christ. What about us? What about me? I may be a minister.

In training. But do I still. Leave the. Work. Of day-to-day evangelism. To my minister. Do we just hope. That our minister. And our elders.

Who do represent us. Go about the work. Of evangelism. By representation. No. We shouldn't. Even if. In the Scottish culture. Much is laid.

[15:25] At the door. Of our ministers. Not. A personal hobby horse. Just. An observation. The text. To speak. The word. Without fear.

The brothers. It is. A call. It is a call. To spread the gospel. We would use the word. Propagate. The gospel. So.

It is a big word. This just means. To make known. To make known. Christ. What has he done for us. How he has changed our lives. How he has saved us. And how that same offer. Is available to those. Who can hear. The call of Christ.

Do our neighbors know. That Christ has changed us. Have we ever told them. Revelation 3. Verse 20.

[16:18] Says. Here I am. I stand. At the door. And knock. If anyone hears my voice. And opens the door. I will come in. And eat with that person.

And they. With me. My son. Once again. My son. Was walking home. One day. Along.

With two. Of his. Primary one. And primary two. Friends. And he asked. Word for word. Do you go to church. On a Sunday. I repeat.

Do you go to church. On a Sunday. His. Mother's response. The boy's mother. Said no. Do you.

This is Noah's response. Word for word.

Again. Yes. It's really fun. You do coloring in. And there's stories. And there's snacks. I am walking along. Astonished.

[17:13] Noah. At age six. Sorry. Six. And three quarters. Has done more work. Of evangelizing. To his friends. And his friends.

Mother. Than I have done. In months. Do I. Hide behind. The excuse. That I'm playing. The long game. Or do I. Rightfully. Be so rebuked.

By my sexual son. A number. Of weeks ago. Colin preached. From the verses. Proceeding. Today's passage. Speaking of. Partnership. In the gospel.

Being involved. In the church setting. Bearing each other's burdens. This still remains true.

However. This verse. Is a call. To go out.

Into the world. And make Christ's name known. Be boldened. Be uplifted. By the good news. Like the Roman believers.

[18:08] Be uplifted. This news. Is real. And this news. Is good. The good news. Is unstoppable. And moving. In Paul's.

Immediate circumstances. The good news. Is uplifting. As the believers. Are more. Emboldened. By the circumstances. Thirdly. And finally. Unrestrained.

Good news. How is the good news. Unrestrained. We spent many years. Now. In coronavirus.

Restrictions. Slowly. Coming out of them. To understand.

What it's like. To live. In a world. Without these. Restrictions. Without these laws. Without even.

These masks. Being able to sing. While being able to breathe.

Being able to see our loved ones. And care homes. When previously. Restrictions. Had either.

Been completely. Or partially. Restricted. There is a way.

[19:05] In which Paul. In his letter. As this pastor. That we've spoken of. Is resolving. The questions. He expects. The Philippians. To ask. Regarding. His situation. So.

I've not mentioned it before. But. Generally. People believe. This is written. While he's in prison. In Rome. So. This situation. Is confusing. The Philippians.

Have heard about it. And. Basically. He deals. With every one. Of his. Their problems. In the same way. Worry not.

God is in control. He is moving still. Question one. We've sent you. On a missionary journey. And you're in prison. In what way.

Is God in control? Paul's answer. God is in control. I've been placed here. And people know Christ here. Because of it. The whole.

[20:00] Imperial guard. Question two. If a believer. If the believer's leader. Is in jail. What does this mean. For the church. Are they going to fail? Paul's answer.

Again. God is in control. Because. Of my imprisonment. The church. Is going from strength. To strength. Question three.

You are our church. Planter. And pastor. We hear people. Deriding you. How is God. In control. Now. Paul's answer. Yet again.

Of course. God is in control. Whether they like me. Or not. Christ's message. Is being spread. Praise the Lord. For his control. In this.

The last question. Brings us. To verses. 15 through 18. Reading. Some. Indeed. Preach Christ. [20 : 55] From envy. And rivalry. But others. From goodwill. The latter. Do it. Out of love. Knowing the time. Here. For the defense. Of the gospel. The former.

Proclaim Christ. Out of selfish ambition. Not sincerely. Thinking to. But thinking to. Inflict. 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. Life. Is. Messy. There is more.

Grey. To negotiate. Than black and white. This. Is one of those situations. Why are these verses included? Because. Paul's.

Speaking to real people. And a real time. Dealing with real issues. He is. After all. An apostle. When he speaks. Due credence.

[21 : 49] Is given. He shows a desire. For unity. In the Christian community. In Ephesians 4. 2 to 6. Which says. With all humility.

And gentleness. With patience. Bearing with one another. In love. Eager to maintain. The unity. Of the spirit. In the bond of peace. There is one body.

One spirit. Just as you were called. To that one hope. That belongs to your call. One Lord. One faith. One baptism. One God. And father of all. Who is over all.

And through all. And in all. And a willingness. To uphold. The weaker brother. Romans 14. Verse 1. As for you.

As for the one. Who is weak in faith. Welcome him. But not. To quarrel. Over opinions. And then jumping down. To verse 10. Why do you pass judgment.

[22 : 44] On your brother. Or you. Why do you despise your brother. For we will all stand. Before the judgment. Of seat of God. Both this desire.

For unity. And caring for the weaker brother. Aspects. Are seen. In Paul's pastoral care. In this situation. They're clear.

In these verses. He's an apostle. Has apostolic. Authority. To excommunicate. These characters. Who have made a point. Of being Paul down. When he's down.

They. May be Christians. But aspects of their ministries. Personalities. And words. Don't seem to reflect this. Some commentators. Say they're Judaizers.

But the vast majority. Fall towards Christian ministers. That just have personal rivalry. With Paul. Rightfully so. As even though Paul.

[23 : 40] Does highlight their selfishness. And their ferocity. He does not condemn. Their theology. In any way. In fact. He's grouping these men. Of verses 15 through 18.

With those in verse 14. And the coalition. Resulting in the end goal. Of Christ being glorified. He is saying. The good news of Christ. Is not going to be restrained.

By a political maneuvering. Or by many failings of men. It is unrestrained. As the gospel goes forth. With power. The good news comes from Christ.

With his power. Even though. The description. Of these men. Seems stark. Paul. In this situation. Is negotiating. That gray. With the same answer.

That you would have had in mind. With those Philippians. God is in control. He knows all. And is working everything out. For his purposes. I am even aware.

[24 : 38] In this fellowship. Of times. Where I have fallen short. Of how much. I should love people here. Whilst being a Christian. Still acting out of self-service. And a complete disregard.

For others. I can easily empathize. With these Christians. Doing wrong. And I am eternally. Thankful. For leaders. And fellow believers.

Who like Paul. Didn't write me off. But still love me. Whilst being a weaker. More foolish brother. Paul. In his love. Leaves these problems.

In the hands of God. The Holy Spirit. To do its work. Of conviction. And sanctification. In conclusion. The Philippians.

Would have been naturally. Concerned. We can see the affection. For the church. And the church planter. They have for one another. Has the mission trip failed? Is all lost?

[25 : 35] Paul has a love. And concern. For the good news. Being made known. In Rome. And in Philippi. The whole imperial guard. Know I am here. Because of Christ.

The implications for this. Will be the gospel. Unstoppably. Going forth. In the church. In Rome. The brothers. Emboldened. And uplifted. By the good news.

They have spread the name of Christ. Because. My imprisonment. Rather than falling away. In fear. And trembling. Even those you have heard. Preached to spite me.

Have enmity with me. They are sharing. And the good news. Being spread. It is unrestricted. By human motives. The Holy Spirit. Is still moving.

Powerfully. As Christ. Is being proclaimed. The good news. Is unstoppable. Uplifting. Unrestricted today. Even. The Economist magazine.

[26 : 31] A well-known. Non-Christian magazine. States. That Protestant Christianity. Is the fastest growing religion. In China. With at least. 38 million believers.

And that was in 2020. Over six times. The entire population. Of Scotland. Over. 36 times. The entire population.

Of greater Glasgow. There is also stated. That there are 20 million believers. In India. The gospel is going forth.

The good news was unstoppable. In the first century. The good news is still unstoppable. In the 21st century. We. Can be uplifted. By what's happening in Asia.

In the same way. That the Philippian church. Would have been uplifted. By the progress in Rome. Let us. Because we have been given so much. Be spurred on.

[27 : 26] As Christ himself said. Truly. Truly. I say to you. Whoever hears my. Christ's. Word. And believes him. God. Who sent me.

Has eternal life. He does not come into judgment. But is passed from life to death. This is what we as Christians have. Why would this not spur us on.

In God's strength. To proclaim God's name. Here in Partick. In Glasgow. Even from the Abrahamic covenant. We read. We are able to be a blessing.

To all nations. Or even the great commission. Go therefore. And make disciples. To all nations. Church. Let's go. Let's make disciples.

This brings me. To a vital point. Is there anyone here. Who doesn't know Christ. As their Lord. Anyone. Who isn't a Christian. Listen.

[28 : 24] To what Paul. Has to say. To you today. If you confess. With your mouth. That Jesus is Lord. And believe in your heart. That God raised him.

From the dead. You will. Be saved. Have you seen. How Paul's life. Was transformed. By Christ. What. We willingly. Went through. Because Christ.

Is beyond. Worth it. Brother. Sister. Do not spend. Another second. Rejecting Christ. If Christ. Is knocking. At the door.

Of your heart. Like we read. In Revelation. Chapter 3. Let him come in. And eat. You can go away. Today. With a future hope. That is secure.

And is good. Because the good news. Is good news. The best news. The good news. Is unstoppable. The good news. Is uplifting. The good news.

[29 : 19] Is unrestricted. Amen. Let's pray. To God. Our God.

We praise you. For how you. Inspire. For the inspired words. The Philippian church. Your good news. Is unstoppable. We pray. We are encouraged.

By your word. And your spirit. Make us. Even more bold. To share the truth. About you. And the redemption. That is an offer. To those. We know.

We thank you. That you are here. Because we are here. Because it's your plan. For us to hear. The gospel. The good news. And our lives. Have been changed. Ever since. We pray.

You are glorified. We pray. You use us. As tools. In the great commission. To this world. A world. Who is sick. And needs. Your fountain. Of life. Be here.

[30 : 14] With us. As we leave here. Let us tell. Ourselves. Each other. And those we know. Of the hope. That we have. In Jesus. In Jesus Christ's name. Amen.