

Philippians 1:12-20

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. We're in the book of Philippians. And whenever I speak, Mark always wants a joke.
- And the only joke that I can come up with today is a really old one. And I said something this morning. I said, well, I don't have a joke. I said, it's old. And I asked him, have you ever heard? And I started it. No, Glenn has never heard it either.
- Yeah, and that's just because you're so much older than me. Yeah, well, I don't think I am, though. Anyway, I was looking for a prison joke because Paul's in prison in the passage today.
- So there was this guy visiting a prison. And as he was being given the tour, they were walking down the hall in front of the cells.
- And it's quiet in there. And all of a sudden he hears somebody yell out, 33! And the whole place just busts out laughing. Every cell, everybody just dying laughing.
- [1 : 1 0] And he thought, wow, that's weird. And as he's walking along, they're like, 17! And the place busts out laughing again. And he says, he asked the guy who's giving him the tour.
- He said, what's happening here? This is strange. What's happening? He said, oh, these guys have been in here for so long. And we've told each other the same joke so many times.
- We've just numbered. Instead of telling it all over again. And everybody, when they hear the number, they think of the joke and they laugh. And it's just a good time.
- So that's what's happening. He said, well, you think I could give it a shot? I said, yeah, go ahead. So he says, 12! 12! And it's dead silence.
- And nobody's laughing. Nobody's doing anything. And he's like this. Man, what's happening? What just happened? He said, well, some people just can't tell a joke.
- [2 : 1 3] So today we're in the book of Philippians. Let's pray before we get started. Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for the singing that we've had this morning and for the praises that's gone up to You.
- We pray, Father, that in everything that we do this day will bring You glory and bring a smile to Your face. Thank You for loving us.
- Thank You for gathering us safely here together today. And now, Lord, as we look into Your Word, please teach us. Help me, Lord, not to stumble over any words that You've given me.
- And help me, Lord, to remember the things that You've brought to my mind that need to be said. We trust Your Word, Lord. We know that Your Word is strong and true.
- And Lord, as long as we're proclaiming Your Word, then I can't really mess up. Now we ask You now to keep everybody away. Keep our young ones, Lord, as we discussed this morning.
- [3 : 1 1] Lord, as we're praying to sit and listen and try to understand what You're hearing. And Lord, I've already told them I'm going to quiz them next week on what we preach today.

I dare say most of the adults wouldn't be able to pass that quiz, but I pray, Father, there'll be some kind of nugget that comes out today that everyone will take with them.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Philippians. Philippians is what Paul wrote the book of Philippians. And as you know, we just started it. Phil started us out last week.

Well, John started us with an overview the week before, or the week before that, or something. But anyway, Paul wrote the epistle of Philippians, and it's been penned or talked about as the epistle of joy.

The idea of rejoicing occurs more than 16 times in this little fourth chapter book, rejoicing or rejoice or have joy or something. 16 times rejoicing in every circumstances, finding joy amidst trials.

[4 : 22] That's one of the major themes. And that's something that has really come to life to me as I've been studying this. That's how Paul is.

Paul is looking and choosing joy. No matter what his situation, and his situation in this particular epistle is, he's writing from prison.

He's in prison. But he penned also, later in the book, he said, I have learned that no matter what state I am, to be content.

So he's joyful, and he's content, and something that really stuck out to me is Paul has a passion for the gospel. And that's what we're going to look at here.

In the very first chapter of Philippians, in verse 4, he said, oh, by the way, I'm not putting any scripture up here on the screen for you today, so if you want to verify that I'm reading the correct scripture to you, you better get your Bible out, because I might throw some words in there.

[5 : 36] You might not be there, so don't trust me. Look in your Bibles. Paul says in verse 4, in all my prayers for you all, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

In verse 7, he says, whether I'm in chains, it's right for me to feel that way about all of you since I have you in my heart, and whether I'm in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

Further on in verse 12, it says, no song. I tell you, you hit the wrong buttons.

Things just... Bear with me. I've closed my screen somehow, and all my word searches have gone blank.

I've closed my control. Verse 12 says, now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

[6 : 58] Verse 14, brothers and sisters, become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

Verse 16, it talks about that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. That's just in this first chapter.

Just in the first chapter of Philippians, he uses this word gospel. And it's used, if you look at all of Paul's writings, he mentions the gospel 72 times.

72 times, Paul, it has become his life. As a matter of fact, to sum it up, for him in Romans 5.20, it says, it has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known.

And then in Romans, 1.15, Paul says, so as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you.

[8 : 06] In other words, with all of my being, as much as I can conjure up in my being, I want to preach the gospel. The gospel is Paul's life.

Now, this is a real big contrast from where Paul started out.

When we first met Paul, what was Paul doing? Yeah, this gospel thing was something that was not healthy in Paul's opinion.

He was going around trying to squash this gospel. As a matter of fact, he had gotten the list of names and he was heading to Damascus with this list of names for these people that are proclaiming this gospel or have anything to do with this gospel.

And he was on his way to squash this thing. But on that way to Damascus is when he came in contact with the Lord. And he's never been the same after that.

[9 : 17] Now he is, from being the biggest opponent of the gospel, he is now the biggest proponent of the gospel. Something about that, until you've experienced that power of the gospel, then you can never really have a passion for it.

Until you experience it, then it's not something that means that much to you. William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, said this, some men's passion is for gold.

Some men's passion is for art. Some men's passion is for fame. My passion is for souls. And if he and Paul were to meet, they would shake hands and say, brother, you and me are the same on this.

That's my passion as well. So knowing these things about Paul, he's joyful, he's content, he has passion for the gospel.

Let's start reading in verse 12, which was what I was assigned, verse 12 of Philippians. chapter 1.

[10 : 37] Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me, and I'm going to stop there, something's happened to Paul. Something has happened to Paul.

What is it? For one thing, he's in prison again. He's been falsely accused multiple times. He's been beaten multiple times.

And the chain of events that has landed him here in Rome, he's in Rome in prison, where he's writing now, is recorded starting in Acts 21.

And I'll give you a rundown. It was after his third missionary journey. Paul returns to Jerusalem. And while in the temple, he's attacked by some Jews.

A bunch of Jews come in there, and they say, this guy is defiling the temple. He's brought a Gentile in here. It wasn't true that he hadn't brought a Gentile, but they said it anyway.

[11 : 42] They lied about him. They didn't like him, and they were trying to get rid of him. So, there was a mob that came together, and they were going to kill Paul.

But the Romans arrested Paul for his own protection to keep them, to keep the mob from killing him. And then the Romans took him, and they were about to beat him themselves, and Paul said, you know what, I'm a Roman citizen.

It's unlawful for you to be able to be able to. Oh, you're a Roman citizen. So they took him in. And they transported him from Jerusalem to Caesarea by the sea, where he spends two years in jail, incarcerated.

And he undergoes three trials, one under Felix, another trial under Festus, and then he stood before Herod a cripple. After these two years, Paul then pleads his case to Caesar.

Which was every Roman citizen, every Roman citizen's right, they can appeal their case to Caesar. So now he's on his way to Rome.

[12 : 55] They load him up in a prison ship. They start taking him to Rome. What happens on the way? A shipwreck. He ends up having to swim to shore.

And there's a whole lot more details. I'm just giving you an overview. There's a lot of things that happen in there. So, he's on the Isle of Malta.

They stay there for some months. Then they finally make their way back onto a boat, head to Rome, where now he's imprisoned again in Rome.

The point is, Paul has every humanly speaking right to not be joyful. He's got people lying about him.

He's being beaten for no reason. His freedoms have been taken away. Why be joyful? A lot of people would just roll over at this point and say, you know, I just give up.

[14 : 03] Where's God? Why is God allowing these things to happen to me? Why isn't God intervening for me? Because I don't deserve this. And he didn't.

He didn't deserve those things. Those were all unjust things. He didn't deserve any of it. So why is he talking about being joyful right now?

The answer to that is in the second part of that verse that we were just reading. It says, I tell you, brothers and sisters, what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

That's his passion. The gospel is his passion. Paul in his situation has come to realize God has opened his eyes to see that Paul, it's alright.

All these things that have been happening to you, look what's happened. The gospel has been advanced. And then he tells us how it's been advanced. In verse 13, as a result, it's become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I'm in charge for Christ.

[15 : 16] The whole palace guard. The palace guard is called the Praetorian Guard. This is what I learned in this study.

What these guys are, these are the elite soldiers. There's about 10,000 of them. These are the guards that have been in charge of protecting the emperor.

These are the elite of the elites, the best of the best. And more than likely, it could be that somebody prayed somewhere along the line about, boy, if we could get the Praetorian people, get the gospel to the Praetorians, wouldn't that be neat?

That's not in the Bible. It doesn't say that, but it's possible. God can say, I can make that happen. I can make that happen. So here, this Praetorian, the reason Paul says they've been reached is because he was chained to a guard 24 hours a day.

They worked six-hour shifts. So every six hours he had a new guard that was chained to him. Talk about being in captivity.

[16 : 39] The guard was in captivity too because he was chained to Paul. He couldn't run away. You might talk to somebody about the Lord someday and just kind of wander off from you. I don't want to hear that.

This guard couldn't do that. He was stuck with Paul six hours. What do you think he talked about? More than likely, the gospel. Let me tell you about the gospel.

Let me tell you about who Jesus is. Let me tell you what happened. And I'm going to tell you why Jesus is the Messiah. Paul. And some of them got saved.

We know that because in chapter four, in the final greetings, Paul says, all God's people here send greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

How did the Caesar's household hear about this? because they were chained to Paul and they believed. Verse 13, it says, what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel as a result.

[17 : 49] It's become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Who is that? Everyone else. So, what I've learned in all this, although Paul was in prison, he wasn't in a dungeon.

He wasn't in a prison cell. Does anybody know where he was? In a house. In a rented house. They had rented a house where Paul was and that's found in Acts 28.

It says, Acts 28, 30, and 31 records, for two whole years, Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him.

So, for two years, Paul was preaching the gospel to anyone who would come to see him. He had freedoms. He couldn't leave, though. He was chained to a guard.

He was under house arrest. So was the guard. And people would come to see him. They had elders come to see him. They wanted to come and see him and learn.

[18 : 57] learn. And he preached the gospel. And a lot of people accepted Christ. So for two whole years, what's really neat about this, for two whole years, Paul's ministry was funded by the Roman government.

Paul also, not in his down time, while he was there, when he wasn't sharing the gospel with other people or teaching them, Paul was writing letters.

He wrote the books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, during these two years that he was in house arrest. So the longest period of Paul's incarceration was the greatest period of Paul's impact.

One commentator stated it this way, Paul's confinement was God's assignment. So perhaps you see yourself as being imprisoned in some way.

You're stuck in a job you don't like. Maybe you're in a relationship you don't like. Maybe you have some kind of physical ailment that's got you down.

[20 : 24] Know that God is in control. There's something there. There's something there for you to learn. There's something there for you to just trust God.

Just trust Him. I think because of Paul's relationship with God, he could see that. He could say, you know what?

It's okay. Because the gospel is being advanced. If he had been in a pity party or mad at God, wondering why God isn't doing something for him, maybe he would have never seen that.

But because he sees it, it brings him more joy. So Paul is choosing joy. And that's something we have to do sometimes.

Just choose to be happy. I'm not going to let this get me down. I'm just going to be happy. Like the song says, don't worry, be at. So I encourage you to trust God's providence and sovereignty no matter what.

[21 : 35] Just know that he's there, that he cares for you. Just choose joy. As we continue on with the verses, verse 14, and because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

So there's another point that Paul's making. Okay, I'm in prison. Other people who, you know, in Rome, there's all these people that realize that, well, he's in jail because he's proclaiming the gospel.

maybe I need to keep my mouth shut. But as they're seeing, well, he's having an impact. He's actually doing things.

And if he can do something in jail, how much more can I do outside of jail? And it emboldened them so that they also proclaim the gospel without fear.

Paul says in 15, it's true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I'm put here for the defense of the gospel.

- [22 : 53] The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I'm in chains. I was reading a commentary on that, trying to figure out what good Paul can see out of this.
- one of the things that the commentator brought out is more than likely there were people out there that were jealous of Paul.
- They were preaching the word, but their hearts weren't exactly right. They were jealous of Paul's impact, perhaps jealous of Paul's support that he's getting from other churches and stuff.
- And they want to get their hands on it. I want to be like that. So, they were possibly bad-mouthing Paul being in prison.
- They were doing it for their own selfish gain. That's what we got out of what I think possibly could be the reason for that verse.
- [24 : 07] But what's really neat is Paul's like saying he doesn't have any hard feelings toward that at all. Matter of fact, so what?
- He's like, so what? The gospel is being proclaimed. It's okay. Yeah, talk bad about me all you want as long as you preach the gospel and you let other people know.
- That's what it says in verse 18. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether a false motives are true, Christ is preached, and because of that, I rejoice.
- Those are the things that I wanted us to get out of today's lesson that I felt like that God wanted me to encourage you. You may be, like I say, you may be in some kind of prison.
- You may feel like you're in prison. You are being chained in some way, whether it's a relationship. You are so tired of people lying, so tired of people seemingly getting their way, so tired of being bothered.
- [25 : 15] But God's in control. It'll be alright. Just trust Him. Let's pray. As you're sitting there with your heads bowed, think about your life.
- Have you given away your joy? Have you allowed these troubles, this prison you're in, or these circumstances to steal your joy?
- Do you think about Paul? Have that outlook like Paul has. you remember when you had a passion for the gospel?
- Have you lost that passion because of this crazy world we live in? Get it back.
- Trust God. Father, thank You for this word. It was brief, I think, but I pray, Father, that the message got out that You, Lord, are a circumstance engineer.
- [26 : 36] Paul really wanted to go to Rome. He said so in his book to the Romans. I want to come to you and that we can build each other's faith and work with each other. It's great.
- It didn't work out the way Paul expected. He's in Rome in prison. But, Father, You knew best. Pray, Father, that we'll understand that You always know best no matter what happens.
- Lord, You won't be mocked. Lord, the things that some people do that are just against You or against others, Lord, it won't go unpunished by You.
- And, Lord, our faith in You and our trust in You won't go unrewarded either. Thank You so much, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.
- Amen. If y'all will stand with us, we're going to sing one more song. Um, ad out.
- [27 : 45] This is- is more good.