

Sermon Outline for FBC January 13th, 2019

They Cannot Imprison the Message

Good morning!

Today my message is entitled “They Cannot Imprison the Message!” We are walking through the book of Philippians to try to capture what the early church was like and what the early Christians did with their lives. The Apostle Paul is the author of this very personal letter to the Philippian believers. Paul spent a lot of his life in prison for his faith and yet the message he was sharing got out and around to change lives.

Last week we read Paul’s greeting to the Philippian church and his encouragement for them to have joy in Jesus. In the introduction to Philippians, in my Study Bible, we read this:

“In fact, the most joyous book in the Bible comes from the pen of an author chained to a Roman guard. Many scholars believe Paul wrote Philippians in Rome just about the time Nero began tossing Christians to ravenous lions and burning them as torches to illuminate his banquets. How could a rational man devote a letter to the topic of joy while his survival was in serious jeopardy? In such an environment, how could joy possibly survive?”¹

Now, in chapter one, verses 12-30, we read about Paul’s imprisonment and how God worked through Paul to reach the guards in the palace and how Paul viewed his incarceration.

Philippians 1:12-14 NIV

12 Now I want you to know, brothers, [The Greek word for brothers and sisters (*adelphoi*) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God’s family; also in verse 14; and in 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 8, 21.] that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard [Or whole palace] and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

The Devotional Bible-New Century Version, in its introduction to Philippians, gives us a view of Paul imprisoned.

“Let’s go to the city of Rome, go to a drab little room, surrounded by high walls. Peek in and see a man seated on the floor, an older fellow, shoulders stooped and balding. Chains are on his hands and feet. And chained to him is a guard from the Roman Army.

It is the apostle Paul. The apostle who traveled all over the world. The apostle who has liberated people in every port. The apostle who was bound only by the will of God is now in chains – stuck in a dingy house – attached to a Roman officer.

He is writing a letter.

No doubt it is a complaint letter to God. No doubt it is a list of grievances. No doubt he is writing the New Testament version of Lamentations. He has every reason to be bitter and complain. But he doesn’t. Instead he writes a letter that two thousand years later is still known as the treatise on joy.²

Philippians 1:15-21 NIV

15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.

16 *The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.*

17 *The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.*

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.*

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,

19 *for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. [Or vindication; or salvation]*

20 *I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*

21 *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

Eugene Peterson, in “The Message”, states verses 20, 21 like this:

“I don’t expect to be embarrassed in the least. On the contrary, everything happening to me in this jail only serves to make Christ more accurately known, regardless of whether I live or die. They didn’t shut me up; they gave me a pulpit! Alive, I’m Christ’s messenger; dead, I’m His bounty. Life versus even more life! I can’t lose.”³

Philippians 1:22-30 NIV

22 *If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!*

23 *I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;*

24 *but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.*

25 *Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,*

26 *so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.*

27 *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one Spirit, [Or in the one spirit] contending as one man for the faith of the gospel*

28 *without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.*

29 *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,*

30 *since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.*

Paul addressed this also in **Romans 5:3-5 NIV**

3 *Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;*

4 *perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

5 *And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.*

And in **2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NIV**

9 *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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

10 *That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

What do you think? Will you stand firm for Jesus when the road gets rough? Do you praise God when you are hurting, frustrated, bullied, or disbelieved? Remember that Jesus first died for you so you would

not suffer alone. Remember Paul, who suffered with joy and expectation to show all those around him a different way to walk through life.

Let's pray!

¹My Study Bible, pg. 1236

²The Devotional Bible, pg. 1439

³Eugene H. Peterson, pg. 2137

Bibliography:

The Experiencing God Study Bible (Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1994)

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Eugene H. Peters, The Message (Navpress, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 2002)
