

PAUL'S PRESENT JOY

Philippians 1:12-18a

INTRODUCTION

READ Phil 1:12-26 → Some call this “Paul’s Missionary Report”

1:18 → Key verse for 1:12-26. We are going to split this key verse in two ☺

Today: Paul’s **Present Joy** 1:12-18a
Next Week: Paul’s **Future Joy** 1:18b-20

Proposition:

- I. Source of Paul’s Present Joy (The Good Report/Summary) v.12**
- II. Products/Results (Outside the Church/Inside the Church) vv. 13-14**
- III. Mixed Motives (Pure/Impure) v.15-17**
- IV. Source (Part 2) → Paul’s Present Joy v.18a**

So That: Despite opposition from without (the church)
... despite jealous immature opposition from within (the church)
→ The Gospel is advancing! And this produces joy!

- I. Source of Paul’s Present Joy 1:12**

Point – The Good Report, Summary Statement

“¹²Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,”

→ He goes from the most elevated purpose and focus “to the glory and praise of God” (v. 11) to an intimate personal update to his “brethren”

Now you see **Paul** describing his circumstances in some of his other letters. But in his other letters, this statement of his present circumstances takes place at the end of the letter.

→ Unique to Philippians to find this statement at the beginning.

- also notice the length and detail of this statement

As good students of the Word, we ask “Why?”

“¹²**Now I want you to know, brethren**” – this is an intensely personal letter to beloved brothers and sisters → 6 times - “**brethren**,” 3 times - “beloved”

→ Purpose of this Letter

1) Report to church on **Paul’s** wellbeing (deeply concerned)

2) Inspired Thank you letter

3) Return of **Epaphroditus** following his serious illness

2:25-30 – positive affirmation of **Epaphroditus**

Money had been collected and sent to Rome with **Epaphroditus**

It is very likely that **Epaphroditus** stood up and read Paul’s letter to the congregation.

“I am writing this to set your loving and friendly hearts at ease.”

“**that my circumstances**” – journeys to Rome and his imprisonment

Illustration – **Paul** doesn’t start to sing “No Good Deed Goes Unpunished” with Elphaba (from “Wicked” Broadway Musical)

→ **Turn to: 2 Cor 11:23-27**

Here in his letter, **Paul** doesn’t call attention to himself as a sufferer. He doesn’t elaborate his discomforts. He doesn’t want people’s pity.

BECAUSE → Paul understand his “**circumstances**” are not an impediment for the Gospel; But rather, an impetus

“have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel” –

Note! → **Paul** does not say that his trials, tribulations, and possible impending execution have not hindered the “progress of the gospel,” but they have advanced the gospel!

“progress” – word means advancement even through obstacles

He does not say “in spite of.” He says “because of”!

Illustration– Generally speaking, persecution will cause the Gospel to flourish. But that is not always the case in every individual situation.

Sometimes persecution becomes extermination.

Before Europe came to power in the middle ages, North Africa was a major center for early Christianity. Perhaps some of these names of early Christian fathers are familiar to you: **Tertullian, Clement** of Alexandria, **Origen** of Alexandria, **Cyprian, Athanasius, Augustine** of Hippo.

What happened??

→ The vicious savagery of Islam exterminated Christianity in North Africa (for all intents and purposes).

But the Truth of God marches on.

Spurgeon – *“If Jesus loves you, and you are sick, let all the world see how you glorify God in your sickness ... If your religion is worth anything it ought to support you now, and it will compel unbelievers to see that he whom the Lord loves is in better case when he is sick than the ungodly when full of health and vigor.”*

II. Products/Results

1:12-14

Point – Paul’s **Powerful Witness** → Outside the Church, Inside ...

A. Progress on the Outside vv. 12-13

Point – Conviction

Proof – “¹³so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ* has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,”

“so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ*”

- **Paul** is not in prison because he is a criminal.
- He did not break a law.
- He is not engaged in “civil disobedience.”
- He is imprisoned for the Gospel!
- He is imprisoned for the preaching of Christ.
- He is imprisoned “in Christ.”

The soldiers and the Praetorian Guard know Paul was a prisoner for Christ because they were chained to him and they heard him and saw him 24/7

→ what a powerful witness!

“**the whole praetorian guard**”

- 9000 men
 - official bodyguards of the emperor
- Paul is evangelizing the elite company of Caesar’s troops.

The message of this prisoner who is in bonds for Christ has spread throughout the whole guard.

Turn to: → **Acts 9:15; 23:11** → Promise and Prophecy fulfilled!

“**and to everyone else**” – The Gospel is spread by the powerful witness of Paul, from prison!!

→ To all the citizens of Rome

→ **Phil 4:22!**

Illustration – A good witness isn't like a **salesman**. A good witness is like a **signpost**. It doesn't matter whether it is old or young, handsome or ugly. As long as the signpost points in the right direction and is able to be understood.

Application – We are witnesses to Christ. We point to Him.

Progress on the Outside, ...

B. Progress on the Inside

v. 14

What do you mean the progress of the Gospel among believers?
→ The Gospel is the whole package - it doesn't stop at the initial point of salvation (justification). The Good News of the Gospel takes someone from their new birth all the way through the process of sanctification.

Point – Infectious Christianity → boldness is catching, godliness is catching. → Contagious Courage

Proof – “¹⁴**and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.**”

“**trusting in the Lord**” – **2 Cor 1:8-9** – “For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; ⁹indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;”

“**have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear**”

Illustration - You can compare **evangelism** to **fire**. Evangelism occurs when Christians are so ignited by their contact with Christ that they in turn set other fires.

It is easy to determine when something is on fire. It ignites other material. Any fire that does not spread will eventually go out.

Application – Just as a fire that does not burn is a contradiction in terms, in the same way, a Christian who does not evangelize is also a contradiction in terms.

Was this important for believers in Rome? This courage?

Illustration – Paul writes this early A.D. 60's under the Roman Emperor Nero. Nero set Rome on fire in the summer of A.D. 64 . He then blamed Christians for the burning of Rome. The executions following the fire were of two forms provided by law for arson: dismemberment by animals and public burning. Some were covered with pitch and used as living torches to light the imperial gardens at night.

→ Courage would be very important

III. Mixed Motives 1:15-17

Paul is expanding on those within the church and giving more clarity on the second group.

Point – Pure, Impure

Proof – ¹⁵**Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;**

v. 14 – “**speak**” → lalew

v. 15 – “**preach**” → khrussw

v. 16 – “**proclaim**” → kataggellw

The first is the privilege and responsibility of all; everyone. The latter two are used in Scripture to describe the cries of a herald, the teaching of an elder, the preaching of a pastor.

A. Pure Motives

Point – “^{15b}**but some also from good will**” – aligned with good will towards Paul ... because aligned with the will of God.

Proof – “¹⁶**the latter *do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;***” - pure motives
→ Love motivates

“**appointed**” – military term for appointment, placement on duty
“**for the defense of the gospel**” – military term, enduring hardship

The concept of duty has fallen into disfavor in some sectors of Christianity. It is looked down upon. There is some merit to taking delight in the duty. But duty is not a bad thing.

Illustration – Think about the duty of brushing your teeth. I’m sure none of you woke up this morning thinking ...
→ “What a beautiful day! It’s a great day for brushing teeth!”

Application – But we brush our teeth every day because we know if we don’t do it, there will be repercussions. In the same way, we have duty that God gives us. Duty is good in and of itself. When we have delight in that duty, it brings God glory.

Those who had pure motives while preaching Christ understood this.

B. Impure Motives

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Point – “^{15a}**Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife**”

Illustration– Alistair Begg told the story of a Scottish farmer who spoke to a local pastor in his farm town who had just returned from a leader’s conference.

“You church leaders are like dung,” he said
to the local minister.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, when dung is spread far and wide over a large area, it is very useful as a fertilizer.”

“But when a lot of it is gathered together in a big pile, it stinks.”

“envy and strife”

- both listed in the “deeds of the flesh” in **Galatians 5:19-21** (among those who will not inherit the kingdom of God)
- **Rom 1:29** (third phase – spiritual sociopaths)
- **1 Tim 6:4** (false teachers)

What is sobering is that Paul is talking about people... in the church?!?!?!? ... preachers of the Word of God?!?!?!?

Proof – “^{17a}**the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives,**”

“selfish ambition” – from factions → strife and contention

– **Gal 5:20; James 3:14,16**

“^{17b}**thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.**”

→ **Note!!** → **“knowing”** (v.16) vs. **“thinking”!** (v. 17)

- difference between impure motives vs. pure motives
- between Truth vs. imagination
- between love of God vs. love of self

“distress” (in Paul’s imprisonment) – qli/yij: trouble, suffering – same word as **“tribulation”** in Revelation – the grinding of the olives in the olive mill grindstone - like pouring salt on the wound

There is a letter written about 90 A.D. by Clement in which he makes reference to jealousy and strife which in some way caused Paul's execution.

James Montgomery Boice – *“Did you know that Paul very likely lost his life as a result of the trouble caused by the troublemaking Christians at Rome? The information that exists from the early church age about the death of Paul and the things that led up to it points to this conclusion: envy led some Christians to denounce Paul and, as a result of their denunciation, Paul and perhaps others also were presumably executed under Nero”*

So what does Paul have to say about this?

IV. Source (Part 2) 1:18z

Point – **Final Analysis** → Paul's Present Joy

Proof – ^{18a}**What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.”**

“What then? Only that in every way,”

→ So what? Either way. It's a win-win. Christ will be exalted in either case. God will be glorified. Paul will grow.

“whether in pretense or in truth”

→ The idea that there is a polarity, truth and error

→ This offends postmodern sensibilities.

→ This offends the politically correct illuminati.

But Paul says – whether in duplicity or in sincerity

... when **“Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice,”**

“Christ is proclaimed” – some will say, “You see. Paul is saying it doesn't matter what you say. The content doesn't matter.”

Well, you don't have to go very far to find this is not the case. Just turn a page in your Bible and look at **Philippians 3:1-2:**

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things *again* is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;”

→ Paul is very concerned about the content!

Present Joy – “**and in this I rejoice**” – KEY! - single-minded joy

Joy is the atmosphere of the letter. It is the background music.

→ It is what is playing as you read through this.

The theme of the letter is Christ. This is seen in this passage – the singular focus of Paul and what gives him joy in his precarious situation → “**Christ is proclaimed**”

Paul has one criterion → as long as Christ is preached

CONCLUSION

Paul’s past was agonizing. His present is perilous.

But Paul knows, behind the sometimes frowning Providence of God, He hides a smiling face for His children.

Paul realizes this. And he **rejoices greatly**.

The Puritan **John Flavel** wrote, *The Mystery of Providence*, said this: “*Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made of a thousand shreds, which, single, appear useless, but put together, they represent a beautiful history to the eye.*”

Paul understood this. Paul sees how it is put together in the outworking of God as the gospel is advancing in Rome.

From the present advance of the gospel to the future assurance of the gospel

From Present Joy to Future Joy

→ “^{18b}yes, and I will rejoice.”

Next time ...