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The Unstoppable Gospel; Philippians 1:12-18
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Introduction – Behind our text today is a universal truth that applies to every believer. For the most part, we live each day unaware that not only is this truth present in our lives, it is also working. We often overlook it and therefore miss the joy in it and fail to refer to it as needed. Here it is: the grand universal truth for believers – everything that happens to us in this life, blessing or trial, victory or defeat, attack or applause, sickness or health – everything is somehow uniquely fit for that situation to make way for the gospel. To put the gospel on display. To open hearts for the gospel. To plant seeds of the gospel. To rejoice in the hope of the gospel. There is a gospel ends to every situation in the life of a believer.

How many physicians, steeped in science and disregarding of faith, have been stunned by the unwavering faith of believers facing a daunting diagnosis!

Along our journey through Philippians we will encounter many monumental lessons of faith and this is surely one of them. We live in days of moral confusion and economic uncertainty. Whether God places us on the side of needing help or on the side of blessed and able to offer the help needed, both are occasions to make way for the gospel.

If we can grasp this lesson today, there is a wealth of joy awaiting us. Imagine if we embrace this truth! If we lived every day, in every circumstance, living life believing and responding as if what occurs around us and to us in some way is advancing the life-changing, soul-saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ! Too often we only think of being a gospel witness when someone challenges us by example or with a sermon. Many days pass us by, time and opportunities that we don't get back, to be intentional about seeing the gospel spread among those unsaved or encourage the saved around us. What we find today in our text is that some of the most powerful ways to advance the gospel are the times when we hurt or have been mistreated. Those divinely appointed times are unique opportunities to place the gospel where it rarely goes. And when the gospel light shines in new places, it shines bright.

That is the heart of what Paul is teaching us in today's text.

- I. Efforts to Stop the Gospel Serve Only to Advance It. (5 ways)
 - a. What enemies mean for evil, God will use for good!
 - i. Paul knows the Philippians are concerned about his wellbeing in prison. So he wants them to know they have no need to worry because his imprisonment is advancing the gospel in ways his freedom was unable to do.
 - ii. Notice how he quickly changes the subject from himself to the gospel – what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. That is how you need to see – not oh poor Paul – but look what God is doing! Paul knew it wasn't about him; it was actually about the gospel. And knowing that made joy huge in his life.
 - iii. People were against Paul because at the root of it, they were against the gospel. Everything they did to him, they did to silence the gospel, however, their efforts only caused the gospel to shout in other places where it was once silent.
 - iv. They beat Paul, and he said, "these scars are the marks of the gospel." They imprisoned Paul, and he said, "Let's sing Silas!" They plotted to kill Paul, and he said, "for me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Whatever means they employed to stop Paul could not stop the gospel!
 - v. Genesis 50:20 – As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."
 - b. Strategic gospel employment.
 - i. You see the best way for the gospel to permeate Rome was not in the synagogue where it would be disputed and not in the marketplace where it would be debated, but in house confinement where it had yet been uttered!
 - ii. A hardened roman soldier would care less what a Jewish guy had to say in a jewish church or in the town square. But if he were assigned to watch Paul, he couldn't stop from becoming influenced by the gospel. He heard Paul's letters, he listened to Paul pray, he saw how he encouraged his visitors in the faith, he observed his hope and love, and he couldn't help but notice his unwavering joy. Eventually he came to the conclusion,

there must be something about this Jesus. And the one who would never had gone to hear the gospel was converted by unintended exposure to the gospel.

- iii. Soon he and his comrades were going home and sharing with friends and family. Before long people all over Rome knew about Paul and were believing in Christ – “to all the rest.” 4:22
- c. By-products of Gospel living will advance the gospel.
 - i. The initial impact of Paul’s imprisonment was fear (v14). But Paul’s perseverance and joy under persecution eventually melted the fear away and replaced it with fortresses of courage.
 - ii. Other gospel witnesses began to reason, “If Paul can live for the gospel in prison with joy, surely we can live boldly for the gospel in freedom!”
 - iii. Ill. We are encouraged by the faith of the persecuted.
- d. Wrong treatment of the gospel will advance the gospel.
 - i. 2 things may be happening here in vv15-17.
 - 1. They were envious of Paul’s popularity as a gospel ambassador, so they went about proclaiming the gospel in hopes of gaining a following. They were using the gospel to build their brand, their empire.
 - 2. Malicious intent – if the they could keep the gospel moving, Paul who was the first to introduce it, may come under a harsher punishment.
 - ii. However, while their motives were not pure and they will answer to God for that – their message was true. You see God will bless a needle of truth in a haystack of error. As long as they are proclaiming the gospel, no matter what intent, people will hear the good news of life, and people will believe, and the gospel will keep moving.
 - iii. Paul says, “I know they are against me, but they’re actually doing me a favor! They are spreading the gospel where I’m unable to go!”
- e. The gospel on trial is the gospel on the move.
 - i. Paul says that those who are preaching the gospel now with boldness and love know that Paul is where he is for the purpose of defending the gospel.

- ii. How do you get the gospel into an emperor's house who believes that people should worship him? You charge an imprison a believer like Paul, filled with gospel hope and joy, put him on trial, and when he is questioned, he makes much of Jesus! That's a new form of cross examination.
 - iii. You see the gospel makes a way – it's unstoppable.
- II. The Unstoppable Nature of the Gospel Increased Paul's Joy.
 - a. Those who have been changed by the gospel rejoice at every advancement of the gospel no matter the insult or pain they may endure.
 - i. Paul learned to take advantage of situations when others took advantage of him.
 - ii. Always be on the lookout for unexpected gospel opportunities – they usually come in the form of disruptions or opposition.
 - iii. Ill.flat tire in india
 - iv. When someone hurts your feelings, that's an occasion for the gospel. When someone attacks your faith, that's an occasion for the gospel. When someone mistreats your family, that's an occasion for the gospel...
 - b. Paul can rejoice because whether from good or bad, right or wrong motive – Christ is proclaimed – and therefore the gospel advances against all odds!
 - c. You see the gospel will find a way to the most surprising places. It is unstoppable. Even when the forces of evil collaborate to silence it, the only thing they accomplish is putting it in a place it has yet to be heard!

Conclusion – has the gospel found you yet? I'm so thankful today that when the gospel approached the door of my heart, it didn't stop. In fact, it was unstoppable!

Has the gospel been advanced in our hurt yet?