

**Please turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 1. We are picking up where we left off last week in this prayer that Paul is making for the saints in Philippi. Here in this letter of encouragement the apostle is seeking to further encourage these believers in his absence, even as he is in the bonds of imprisonment. Hear now the Words of the living and true God from Philippians chapter 1 beginning at verse 12.**

**\*Read Philippians 1:12-14\***

**\*Pray\***

**I trust that we all have experienced moments of discouragement throughout our lives. Things don't always seem to go as planned. Jobs that seemed at first to be amazing turned out to be miserable. Projects that seemed to be simple tasks turned out to be nearly impossible to complete. All of these things are mundane, yet they can become so discouraging to us that we are tempted to just give up. And remember, the believers at the church in Philippi we facing this temptation as well. We looked at that in our first sermon on this book. That is why Paul give the reassurance found in verse 6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." But their temptation to throw in the towel, to just give up, wasn't in the mundane things of this life. They weren't simply tempted to give up on their jobs or some project they were doing, but instead they were being tempted by the evil one to throw in the towel and give up on being a laborer for the Gospel. They were being tempted to abandon the single most important thing in this world, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Can you really blame them? Can you really blame these saints for being tempted to abandon the faith knowing all that they have gone through, knowing the persecution that they will be facing, knowing that their spiritual leader and church planter has been imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel? This isn't to excuse away their temptation, but to show that it is not inconceivable to be discouraged in this way. Very few of us here, if any, will face the trials and tribulations that these saints were facing,**

**yet we are not immune to the discouragements of this world and the temptations of Satan to abandon the faith. And as each day passes our society becomes more and more hostile to the faith that we hold so dear. The discouragements of this world will only become greater and great, so you must have a solid foundation and an unshakable truth upon which to hold. The encouragement to you, brothers and sisters, is the same which the apostle Paul prayed for in regards to the Philippian believers: rest in the fact that the Gospel will advance. We will consider this encouragement under three headings: you can have faith in Gospel advancement, you can have strength in Gospel advancement, and you can have boldness in Gospel advancement.**

**So first, let us consider the encouragement that you can have faith in Gospel advancement. Friends, this is of the utmost importance for us to grasp. We must have a right understanding of the advancement of the Gospel. There is a surety that can be had regarding the advancement of the Gospel. Paul writes in verse 12 of our passage, “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” It may have happened to the Philippians, that they were in some degree discouraged in the persecution and imprisonment of the apostle Paul. They might be tempted to think, ‘If this doctrine were indeed of God, God would not suffer one who was so active and instrumental in preaching and propagating it to be thrown by as a despised broken vessel.’ They might be shy of owning this doctrine, lest they should be involved in the same trouble themselves. So Paul is writing, really praying for them, to encourage the Philippians, that they may not feel deterred by the persecution endured by him. He is telling these believers, ‘Do not lose heart, do not faint in your soul, because even in the worst of situations, even when the world is against you, even when the world puts you in chains for the sake of Christ, the Gospel will advance.’ Friends, nothing can stop this Gospel from going forth, from being proclaimed unto all nations, from implanting itself in the hearts and lives of individuals and transforming people, bring them from death**

unto life. In 2 Timothy 2:8-9 Paul writes, “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.” The apostle is standing there saying that even if he is bound, even if he is imprisoned, even if he is beaten, even if he is put in stocks, even if he is locked away, the Gospel of Jesus Christ will go forth unhindered because it can never be bound, it can never be imprisoned, it can never be beaten, it can never be put in stocks, and it can never be locked away. Brothers and sisters, the Gospel will advance, and just as with the Church of Christ, the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

We know this. We know that the Gospel will advance, even in the midst of severe persecution, and we know it is true, not only because the Word of God tells us it is, but because we have seen it ourselves. Recall how it was during the severe persecution of Christian under wicked Roman emperors like Nero that the Gospel spread throughout the world during the first few centuries of the Church. I’m reminded of the great men and women during the protestant reformation who were captured and tried by the Roman Church. They were shackled and thrown into cramped dark prison cells. They were given the very minimum amount of food and water to keep them alive so they could make it to a farce of a trial. Beaten, bloody, starving, these men and women stood before the papist magistrate and gave a defense of the Gospel. The gavel would then crash upon the judges bench and they would hear their sentence of death. As they walked to their demise, their demeanor was calm. As they were brought to the stake, their faces showed peace. As the flames began to lick their bodies, as the pain swelled up inside of them, as the stench of their burning flesh filled their nostrils, their lips sang the praises of the Psalms. The blood of martyrs has been proven to water the seed of the Gospel that has been proclaimed and bring about an advancement of that Gospel. It is like a dandelion: the single dandelion may die, but it is in its death that the seeds spread out and take root in new soil. Nothing can stop the spread of the Gospel.

**And it's not just in past times that we have seen this, but we see it today as well. Friends, consider for a moment the nation of China. It is politically an atheistic communist dictatorship which outlaws all forms of Christianity which are not approved by the magistrate. Yet, even in the midst of a very hostile land, the Gospel is advancing. I have a friend who is a pastor at an RP congregation in China. He said that every five years the number of congregations and members doubles. That is absolutely amazing. We ought to be rejoicing, praise Jehovah that His Kingdom is greater than the kingdoms of this world, and thanking Him that the attempts of the evil one will not be successful. So, brothers and sisters, this ought to be a comfort to you. You can rest in the fact that the Gospel will advance. Habakkuk 2:14 gives us this promise, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." The Gospel will go forth. The Lord's glory will cover the earth. Those magistrates who oppose the advancement of the Gospel and support the persecution of Christ's servants will be held accountable for their actions, and their kingdoms will not stand the fiery wrath of the judgement of the thrice holy God. The nations will rage and the kingdoms will be moved, and the Lord of hosts, with just the simple utterance of His voice, will melt the earth in judgement. The Gospel will advance. The kings of earth will one day bend the knee to King Jesus and kiss the Son lest they perish in the way. This is the world that lies ahead. This is the power of the Gospel to save those who are perishing, to set the captive free, to transform hearts and lives even in the most wicked and corrupt, and yes, even to bring a nation to its knees in submission to Christ Jesus. This is our great hope of what lies at the end of this age. Brothers and sisters, you can have hope in Gospel advancement.**

**And it is that hope that stirs within the hearts of the saints to be empowered. That brings us to our second point of encouragement: you can have strength in Gospel advancement. Look back with me at our passage, "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have**

fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places.” You have to think to yourself the situation that Paul finds himself in order to grasp what it is that he is saying. He is building on the confidence, on the hope that he has of Gospel advancement, and he says that it is because of that hope that he is able to proclaim the Gospel in an otherwise incredibly difficult situation. Remember, Paul is imprisoned, bound in chains. But he is not simply bound in chains himself; no, the common practice was that he would have been bound in chains on either side with the foot and a half long chain being connected to a Roman guard. Because of this prison situation, Paul was given direct access to those who had influence within the Roman courts, and even those within the house of Caesar. Those guards would hear the dictation of his letters that he wrote during his time of imprisonment, including this very one. But not only that, Paul would have shared the Gospel with them directly. The hope that he had in Gospel advancement gave him the strength to see that Gospel advance in mighty ways. Paul’s sufferings made him known at court, where perhaps he would never have otherwise been known; and this might lead some of them to enquire after the gospel for which he suffered, which they might otherwise have never heard of. On this John Calvin writes, “Satan, indeed, has attempted it, and the wicked have thought that it would turn out so, that the gospel would be destroyed; but God has frustrated both the attempts of the former and the expectations of the latter, and that in two ways, for while the gospel was previously obscure and unknown, it has come to be well known, and not only so, but has even been rendered honorable in the Praetorium, no less than in the rest of the city.”

So what is hindering you? The Gospel is not hindered, but are you by your inability to go into the places of influence and spread the Gospel? Friends, you do not have to be the CEO of a company in order to make an impact within the organization by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You do not have to be the most popular kid at your school in order to influence others with the Gospel. You do

not have to be in political office in order to present the Gospel of Christ Jesus to the magistrate and call on them to repent and bend the knee to King Jesus. Paul was not an influential or important man. The most he could claim was that he was a Pharisee trained by Gamaliel. But in the context of Gentile nations and hearers that would not get him anywhere. In fact, he was a man with no real home, traveling from place to place, making tents in order to have a bit of spare cash, and was known to stir up trouble from time to time. Add on top of all of that he is now essentially the lowest of the low, bound in chains in a Roman prison. Yet he had strength in Gospel advancement. It was the promise that when the Word goes forth it never returns void that empowered him in his ministry to the Gentiles. So I ask you again, friends, what is hindering you? Are you relying upon the Spirit's work within you, looking to the faith that you have in the advancement of the Gospel, resting in the promises that all the earth will come to know Jehovah, and trusting Him to strengthen you in your standing before mighty men of this world to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Or are you content with simply sitting there in the lot the Lord has given you, seeing it as a burden and a hindrance, and ultimately believing that, in regards to your efforts, the Gospel is essentially in bondage? Friends, do not believe the lies of the evil one, but instead rest in the fact that the Gospel will advance, and have strength in Gospel advancement.

Or maybe the reason you do not have strength in Gospel advancement is because you do not have hope in Gospel advancement, and the reason you do not have hope in Gospel advancement is because you do not have the Gospel at all. Maybe you've grown up your entire life in the church, hearing the call of the Gospel, and yet you have rejected that sweet gift that has been given to you. Perhaps you are the hypocrite, the one who outwardly appears to be of Christ but inwardly are wicked and of Satan. Are you one of those "who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,"

**and yet you have made the blessing of the Lord of no effect? Listen to me carefully. If you are outside of Christ, if you have not repented and believed the Gospel, if you have not been confronted by the wickedness of your sin and your need for a Savior, then only eternal death and torment awaits you in the fires of hell. Look to Christ, the one who bore the sins of the world on His shoulders, the one who died the death that we should have died, the one who was death, buried, and on the third day rose again from the dead. Look to Him who is ruling and reigning with a rod of iron, to whom one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess is Lord. Hear the call of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.” Today is the day of salvation, for you are not promised tomorrow. Run to Christ, and you too can have hope and strength in Gospel advancement as the Gospel advances in your life.**

**This leads us now to consider our final point of encouragement: you can have boldness in Gospel advancement. Consider with me once again our passage, “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” Do you see how it was the knowledge that the Gospel will advance, no matter the circumstances, no matter the attempts of Satan to thwart it, that instilled confidence and boldness in the saints at Philippi? The expectation of trouble for their religion may have discouraged them initially; but, when they saw Paul imprisoned for Christ, they were so far from being deterred from preaching Christ and praising His name, that it made them more bold; for they could gladly suffer in Paul’s company. They looked upon the sufferings of their pastor, of their leader, and saw how the Lord was advancing the Gospel even in the midst of persecution and it lit a fire in their souls which could not be quenched. Seeing how Christ is magnified and His Gospel advanced in every circumstance gave them confidence and boldness in their efforts for Christ’s Kingdom, casting out any fear or**

hesitancy that they may have had. They could enter into their workplace, they could enter into the marketplace, they could enter into the synagogues, they could enter into pagan temples, they could enter into even the palaces of the civil magistrate and boldly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ without fear of what may happen, all because they knew the Gospel would advance. They saw that those who served Christ served a good Master, who could both bear them up and bear them out, in their sufferings for him. Their confidence gave them courage, and their courage preserved them from the power of fear.

This passage shows us that the tortures of the saints, endured by them in behalf of the Gospel, are a ground of confidence to us. We ought to go farther than we have ever gone before, because we know that the victory has been won and the reward of faithfulness unto death is the crown of life and the Gospel spreading throughout the world. The knowledge of this ought to overcome our fears, that we may speak boldly in the midst of dangers. This is why we can face whatever comes our way; this is why we can stand before kings and governors and bear testimony for Christ's sake; this is why we can be beaten and bruised, battered and bloodied, standing before the sword or the stake, and with boldness and confidence and power and authority, with our last gasping breaths, we can proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this lost and dying world, even as they are killing us. Friends, you have the Lord of all creation, the Sovereign King of the universe, the one who rules and reigns over all things, who holds all things in the palm of His hands on your side. Let that be what casts out your fears. Let the knowledge that the Gospel will advance despite the efforts of the world and Satan be what emboldens you to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." And remember His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."



**If you were at my ordination service on Friday, or if you watched the live stream, you may recall one of the vows I took. Query 6 of the RPCNA ordination vows asks, “Do you believe that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord of men and nations, and that in loyalty and obedience to Him, it is our duty to follow the noble example of the faithful confessors and martyrs of Jesus in their witness for divine truth, and in their sacrifices and labors to establish the Kingdom of God on earth?” Brothers and sisters, we ought to all be able to affirm this query. Let us be as the Philippian believers looking to the persecutions of Paul and seeing how the Gospel was advanced in the midst of it, and having boldness in it. Let us look to the example of the faithful confessors and martyrs which came before us, seeing that the blood that they spilled watered the seeds of the Gospel they planted, and be willing to follow in their footsteps no matter what the cost. Dear saints, you can have boldness in Gospel advancement.**

**Brothers and sisters, do not let the things of this world or the circumstances of life discourage you. Do not let the whisperings of Satan entice you to give up on the faith that you profess. And do not, for one second, ever believe that the Gospel is in chains, that the Word is going forth and yet returning void, that the evils of the world are hindering the work of Christ. Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. When all seems lost, when all seems hopeless, when all seems in vain, rest in the fact that the Gospel will advance.**