

Opportunities Created from Hardships

Philippians 1:12-30

Introduction

Have you ever had plans changed? Do things sometimes seem to never go according to plan? I'm sure the Apostle Paul had the same mindset at times. Things never could seem to go according to plan. Especially being imprisoned because of preaching Jesus. However, while our plans change and often outside our control, there are greater plans that God has in store and we can be assured to trust Him through it all. In this letter, we read about Paul's situation in prison as he writes to the church in Philippi, a church he had close relation to and calls beloved.

Reading of the text

Philippians 1:12-30 ¹² But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; ¹³ So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; ¹⁴ And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: ¹⁶ The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: ¹⁷ But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. ¹⁹ For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I

shall choose I wot not. ²³ For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: ²⁴ Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. ²⁵ And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; ²⁶ That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. ²⁷ Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸ And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. ²⁹ For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; ³⁰ Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Outline

Connection: What can we learn from the Paul on taking every opportunity to glorify God? First:

I. We must choose joy in our present circumstances, vv. 12-17.

A. Paul's circumstance had no hinderance over preaching the Gospel, vv. 12-14.

1. Paul here answers a concern the Philippian church would have.
 - a. Paul is currently imprisoned in Rome.
 - b. Since Paul is imprisoned, this would concern the churches whether he could continue preaching or not.
2. He assured them his situation furthered the Gospel.
 - a. During this imprisonment, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians were written.
 - b. Hypothetically speaking, if it weren't for Paul being put in prison,

we would not be reading from this book today, neither would we have his other prison epistles.

c. God knew exactly what He was doing in allowing Paul to be put in jail.

Note: Think back in times where you felt everything was falling apart. Did God know exactly what He was doing? Absolutely! Some of you may be feeling this way now. Nothing is going right and there could be no way good can come from this. I can assure by the word of God, He knows exactly what He is doing. Trust God!

3. He gives two direct reasons how his situation furthered the Gospel.

1:13-14 ¹³So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

¹⁴And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

a. First, his bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places. His imprisonment and his manner in the midst of it made it clear to all observers that he was not just another prisoner, but that he represented Christ. This witness led to the conversion of many, even some of the palace guard. I can bet on it that Paul was not complaining and begging to be set free but took every opportunity to preach the Gospel to everyone around him.

b. Second, many Christians have gained confidence in preaching the Word boldly and fearlessly.

(1) Paul's situation shows God can use any circumstance for His glory.

(2) Paul's situation shows joy in the Lord is a choice. We can have the same joy as Paul did!

(3) Paul's situation shows that God is in control, and He is good – all the time.

B. Paul considers the motives of others preaching the Gospel, vv. 15-18.

1. Some preach Christ with the motive of envy and strife.

a. These were bad intentions of preaching Christ.

b. These people looked at ministry as a competition.

c. Instead of making it about Christ, they wanted to advance their own name.

d. This was done supposing add affliction to Paul's imprisonment.

(1) Not only did these preachers want to win, they wanted Paul to lose!

(2) However, this did not dishearten Paul. One of my favorite OT phrases in the OT: [Jeremiah 23:28](#) “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.” Jeremiah was distraught over all false prophets speaking lies about the Lord. God assured Him, He knew it all and was against it, Jeremiah needed continue being faithful in His calling and God will sort it out. What is the chaff to the wheat? In other words, what's it to you?

Note: This phrase was first shared with me by Pastor Dill and it stuck with me since when I was interning here at Lighthouse in summer 2014. I was sharing some frustrations I had in the classrooms. The professors would be teaching and the stuff we were learning would impact us for the rest of our lives and future ministries, yet, many students were playing on their phones and paying no mind, they were there for answers for a grade. Pastor simply responded, “what’s the chaff to the wheat.” I’m sitting there like “huh?” he then explained where it came from and then I knew not to be so caught up in other’s bad motives and focus on being faithful to the Lord.

2. Others preach Christ with the motive of good will and love.

a. These were the good intentions.

b. The proper motive for preaching is for Christ to be glorified, never the preacher.

3. Paul sums up his perspective on the motives.

1:18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

a. Whether the motive for preaching was good or bad, he could still rejoice because Christ was preached regardless.

b. Paul’s concern here was not with the content of the Gospel being preached, only with the motives of those who preached. Paul objected if he thought a false or distorted gospel was preached, even if from the best of motives.

Galatians 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

- c. The attitude can be summed up as this: “If you preach the true gospel, I don’t care what your motives are. If your motives are bad, God will deal with you – but the gospel is preached nevertheless. But if you preach a false gospel, I don’t care how good your motives are. You are dangerous and must stop preaching your false gospel, and good motives don’t excuse your false message.”

Connection: Just as Paul chose joy and had a Christ-like attitude throughout His circumstances, we must choose joy in our present circumstances. Second:

II. We must have an eternity perspective, vv. 19-26.

A. Paul’s confidence in his situation, vv. 19-21.

1. Paul was confident his imprisonment would turn to his salvation.

- a. This salvation here he mentions is referring to a present deliverance, not a matter of being born again.
- b. This would be through the prayers of the Philippians and the power of the Spirit. It’s amazing how God uses prayer! Paul’s needs were met by the Spirit of God, and the provision to Paul was brought about by the prayers of the Philippians.

2. Paul was confident He was in the will of God even during His imprisonment.

1:20-21 ²⁰ According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

- a. “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I

shall be ashamed.”

- b. Paul had the confidence that he was in the center of God’s will. He knew God was not punishing him through the adversity he experienced at the time.
- c. Whether he lives, or dies, Christ will be magnified in his body.
 - (1) This imprisonment could lead to his martyrdom, and he was completely okay with that because Christ would be glorified no matter what.
 - (2) His death would mean he gets to be with the Lord!
- d. Paul knew that death was not a defeat to the Christian. It is a gain for the Christian.
- e. In Colossians, Paul also teaches to have our affection set on things above and not on earth.

Colossians 3:1-3 ¹ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

B. Paul’s perspective between life and death, vv. 22-26.

- 1. Paul knew if he lived it would bear fruit.
- 2. He was “strait betwixt two” in other words, torn between two things.
 - a. First, he had desire to depart and be with Jesus.
 - (1) He stated in 2 Corinthians 5:8 that he would rather be absent from the body and be present with the Lord.

(2) This is why it is far better to be with the Lord: First, going to heaven meant he would finally be done with sin and temptation. Second, going to heaven meant that he would see those brothers and sisters who had gone to heaven before him. Last and the best reason, going to heaven meant being with Christ in a closer and better way than ever before.

b. But, if he lived it would be more needful for the church.

(1) There were others that still needed him.

(2) While allowing for the possibility of his martyrdom, his expectation was to be spared this time and reunite with them.

(3) As Paul expected, it came to pass, he did reunite with the Philippians and later was martyred in Rome.

(4) Paul's friendship with the Philippians was so close that he knew that they would be rejoicing to see him again.

Note: What an amazing perspective: Paul viewed his life as truly belong to Christ and as a servant. If Paul were to live, rejoice! This means Paul gets to continue to preach the Gospel and care for His brethren. If Paul were to die, rejoice! This means Paul gets to be with Jesus. Do you see how joyful the Christian life is when your perspective is in light of eternity? If I were to depart from this life, I get to be with Jesus. But because I am here, I have many things to rejoice over. I get to preach the Gospel, I get to enjoy the blessings God gives, I get to serve our youth group, I get to serve Lighthouse Baptist Church, I get to live my life with my beautiful wife, I get watch my son grow up, but most importantly, I get to live my life for Jesus.

Connection: Just as Paul chose joy and had a Christ-like attitude throughout His circumstances, and had an eternity perspective, we must set our minds and perspectives on heavenly things,

Third:

III. We must pursue the furtherance of the Gospel in the way we live, vv. 27-30.

A. The Philippian's responsibility to the Gospel, vv. 27-28.

1. Paul exhorted the Philippians to only let their conversation (or conduct) becometh the Gospel of Christ – meaning, to live in a manner consistent with the Gospel.
2. Whether absent or in person, Paul desired to hear of their affairs, and he desired unity among them so that Jesus would be shown by their actions.
3. Paul desired them to be fearless in the face of their adversaries.
 - a. When Christians stand strong against intimidation against the world, the flesh and the devil, it shows those spiritual enemies that their ultimate destruction is certain.
 - b. It also demonstrates our salvation is certain.

B. The Philippian's basis of having confidence during adversity, vv. 29-30.

1. Just as the Philippians have been given in the behalf of Christ to believe in Him, they have been given also to suffer for His sake.
 - a. Suffering is no stranger to the Christian life, it does not mean God abandons us. It gives the opportunity to grow closer to the Lord and glorify God.
 - b. Their present difficulty was given to them, not as a punishment, but as a tool in God's hand.

2. “Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”

a. They had the same kind of conflict Paul faced.

b. Just as Paul could choose joy in the midst of the conflict, so could the Philippians.

Application

The life of Paul is one that reflects God’s goodness and control in one’s life. What some may intend for evil, God may intend for good as evident in the life of Joseph in the Old Testament. This surely was evident in Paul’s imprisonment. It led to the salvation of soldiers and guards, it led to preachers becoming bolder to preach the Gospel, and it even led to the writing of many of his letters which we read today. So, what about you? You can dismiss all this and just look at it as “that’s just Paul, my life is different, what good can come out of my circumstance?” The same God who worked in Paul’s life can work in yours. First, you need to have your sin problem settled. That solution is the Gospel. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus according to the Scriptures. He died for you, took your punishment, if you would put your trust in Him to save you, then you will have eternal life. Second, if you are saved already, good news, the choice is yours on how view your situations. Will you take it and leave it to the Lord? All things work together for good, to them to that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28). You can trust God to work in you no matter wherever you are, now, you need to get to work on using your hardships as opportunities.

I. We must choose joy in our present circumstances.

II. We must have an eternity perspective.

III. We must pursue the furtherance of the Gospel in the way we live.