

The Gospel Advances Through Hardship

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What a privilege to come into God's presence. Just set me free. As I lift my eyes and see his awesome glory, king of all the ages. Found his sing and found him. All adore him as you live. In his hand he holds the power of his voice he spoke and all things came to be. When I seek his face and bow the knee. He is king of all the ages. Is found in me. God alone is seeing him. All adore him as you live. He is king of all the ages alone. See him lifted up and bow the knee. All adore him as you live. Amen.

Well, good morning and we're going to go ahead and continue our series in Philippians chapter 1. Philippians chapter 1. And I want us to engage with God's word. But before we do, I want to bring us to where we have started with and where we are now. As you recall, the believers in Philippi had a concern, a real concern for Paul's condition where he was in prison in Rome. As we recall, this is about a thousand miles or so distance from each other. He was the church in Philippi and where he was in prison in Rome for preaching the gospel and they wanted to know was this situation going to silence the gospel from being spread? Was this going to halt Paul and his missionary work? No.

However, Paul wanted to not just share that the missionary work is not over, but he wanted to share with the Philippians a shared perspective. A shared perspective. He wanted to emphasize that although the condition was difficult and hard, actually it advanced the mission God had appointed to him. And he wanted to shift the church at Philippi their focus their perspective of what God is doing with Paul not on his personal circumstances but rather focusing on the spread of the gospel. That's what he wanted the Philippians to focus on.

You often let our circumstances dictate our joy. Feeling happy when life is comfortable or lamenting, moaning when we face restrictions. Is that right? However, we're going to see as we examine Philippians chapter 1, verse 12, beginning in verse 12, we see a man whose joy was completely independent of his surroundings. I mean, this man was just oblivious in a way, taking his eyes off of the temporal into the eternal man likely chained, by the way, to a soldier around the clock.

So, Paul had proven that Christ power is most fully revealed in actual human weakness. Let me just draw your attention to, you don't have to turn there, but 2 Corinthians 12:9 states this. This is what Christ specifically told to Apostle Paul when he was at his lowest. This is what Christ said to him. My grace, my grace is sufficient for you. Meaning, anything you're going through, I'm there. For my power is made perfect in weakness. Think of an inverted boasting as you were. Not

when you're strength that you're more powerful, but rather when you're weak, his power is running through your life.

This led Paul to boast inverted boasting in his weakness so that Christ's power could rest upon him. Remember my grace, I'll be with you when you know you're weak. Paul. And so verse 10 in that following verse he emphasizes for when I am weak then I am strong underscoring that true strength is found in reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ.

So last week we explored how Apostle Paul shared with the Philippian church knowing that their relationship was defined by a deep trust in the Lord. This deep abiding affection that won't just flee with an emotion, but rather their hearts were intertwined with each other. The distance didn't matter. They were so connected as if they were right next to each other. Wouldn't we want that in our own personal lives that wherever we are located in our surrounding areas that we're living in, we're just so connected?

We're going to see that with the Apostle Paul and this church a thousand miles away because we're all going through trials. We're all going through separation anxiety as it were. And this is not just when you're young, a little boy or a little girl. This is ongoing issue and God wants to say I'm going to take care of that.

So Paul used this Greek word phroneo which means to adopt a specific mindset to adopt a physical mindset meaning it's not of inside of you it's from outside perspective to you namely God's perspective namely God's perspective that is true wisdom isn't it I mentioned this in the previous sermon Paul did not just feel an emotion he didn't want to just go by his emotions but rather he intentionally chose a godly perspective wherever he was at.

And so he viewed these believers as noted in my previous sermon. He used this word partakers of grace. Meaning that whatever I get to experience, you get to experience. Whatever grace that's given to me, you are going to experience the same grace. You see, that's the kind of stuff we want to share. Amen. Not how bad we feel or our circumstances but rather what is God doing in my life and I want to share with you. I want to dispense this truth because it is truth isn't it?

So instead of seeking sympathy, Paul instead takes his eyes off of himself and he simply just reveals to them, hey this is what God is doing in my life and I want to share with you brothers and sisters the amazing thing that God is doing in this person's cell. You I want to blow your mind. I want you to adopt the same mindset that I have in prison.

And so he's giving him the deepest things that God is doing in his personal life and he's just writing it inspired by the Holy Spirit. He's not just keeping it to himself. He's writing and sharing it with other believers demonstrating what intense love of Christ looks like. It's not internalized. It's dispensed. That's what we call spreading of the gospel. The good news.

That's what Christ wants to do in all of us. He wants to elevate us beyond our current circumstance. Wherever you may be, wherever you may be, even the lowest of the lowest, you can have the same perspective as the Apostle Paul.

So Paul shifts from describing his love for the church, which was last week, to now we're going to see describing how God is going to use his very imprisonment as a strategic tool for the furtherance of the gospel. I look up this word furtherance and it literally means this. It means that you it stops all things that hinder the spreading of the gospel. Like God sets this up providentially in his wisdom. This is the way it was going to be spread with Paul being in prison. Right? In our minds, that's like what? That doesn't make any sense. He's confined, but the gospel cannot be confined. God cannot be confined. And we're going to see this through the scriptures.

So, he proves that a believer considers Christ to be everything. He's saying, "I just want to tell you so much of what God is doing in my life and what Christ is doing that I'm just going to just settle it with you all. And I'm going to just pray for you. I'm going to" And he shared how he wants the love of Christ to abound in their lives just as he is feeling that in his own soul.

So, he was not like this gap like, "Oh, this is Paul and this is you and we're just going to have a different relationship with Christ." No, he's like, "I'm going to pray what God is doing in my life and I'm going to want you to experience the same thing." What only God can do. Amen.

So today's text reveals the outcome of that specific mindset as I mentioned of absorbing the purposes that God is allowing for us to live in and bend every circumstance okay whether good or bad in our lives to the service of the gospel. Okay. So, it's a fluid thing. This thing about our lives, if we're not careful and we just stay fixed, God cannot work in our lives. So, we need to see that whatever he is having you experience, it's for a specific reason. We just need to open our eyes and see it from his perspective. Amen.

So we'll see that when we consider Christ as everything, not just the good but the best in our lives, this is the way God can channel his blessing through us to others. So let us stand out of the respect of God's word and turn with me to Philippians chapter 1 beginning in verse 12.

He says, "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. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill. The one preached Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bond, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then, notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice. Yay. and I will rejoice. May God bless the reading of his word. You may be seated.

I'm going to focus on verses 12 and 13 for this portion of understanding God's word. What we're going to see is God's divine strategy in chains or in bonds as Paul puts it. See, Paul begins with a surprising update. A surprising update. And you notice the phrase the things which happened unto me. See that in verse 12. This is a euphemism basically making something could be big into something small. And so he doesn't say all these things in detail. He just says these things that's the kind of just these things this imprisonment is happening to me. He makes it mild.

Let me just pause there. How many of us, and this is pride by the way, we exaggerate our problems. How many of us exaggerate our problems more than it's supposed to be? You see,

when you are a mature Christian, when you are truly impacted by God's love, you will make the things actually smaller, the bad things in your life, the circumstances in your life. That's what God does in your heart. Amen.

So just know that this expression right away is just it just blew my mind. He just goes it's just a mild thing. And then he says in results he puts the impact and the importance rather in this expression the furtherance of the gospel. I love it. He shifts his perspective like I said from his current circumstance to the important thing the furtherance of the gospel.

As I mentioned, this word furtherance is removing any obstacles and it's the idea furthering that analogy is it allows an army to advance. Okay? So, it's a military term. This word furtherance see no more obstacles. This gospel is being spread like you have no idea. And we're going to go into that.

So, let me just share. Let's just focus on his captive audience. Who was his audience? Well, it was, you notice in the passage, all the palace. You see that? All the palace. So, he was essentially preaching the gospel where he was at. How many times do we feel like, oh, you know, I'm limited here. My situation, it's so bad or people won't listen to me. How many times do we excuse ourselves from preaching the gospel? We don't see that with Paul. He diminishes the things that are limitations with himself and with God what God can do. You see that shift to perspective makes a huge difference. It radically changes the way you see God at work. Amen.

And so his captive audience is the palace. It's where he is at. Essentially it's referring to the Praetorian Guard. Now who are these Praetorian Guard? These were the elite soldiers protecting Caesar. Okay. Much like the modern secret service of United States. So you're talking about elite people that he is addressing. And then we see that that's his audience. Then we go into his continuous pulpit because Paul was chained to these soldiers, by the way, in shifts. And I looked it up. It was 4 hour shifts. So imagine being hooked up to a soldier, Roman soldier for four hours at a time. I stumbled preaching a 40minute sermon. This man was preaching four hours continually, 24 hours a day. It humbled me. It should humble you as well.

Because each new guard became a new hearer of the gospel of Christ. Amen. And Satan thought he had silenced the preacher by putting him in shackles, thinking that that would limit him. But you see, Paul didn't see the shackles. He saw the freedom he had in Christ. He wasn't focusing on that bond. Do you focus on that bond or do you focus on your freedom in Christ like Paul does right here? You see, no one can silence the preacher if you see it from God's perspective. God simply given him a pulpit in the heart of the Roman Empire.

Think about that. Think about the strategic plan God has placed for the Apostle Paul that allowed the gospel to penetrate Caesar's own household. Okay? It's like any dictator you can think of right now. I'm not going to name names, but think of you being in there and you're able to spread the gospel in the heart of it. That's literally the situation that Paul's experienced right here.

So basically, his position of that is that no authority of a free man could have ever have access to unless it was done this way. Amen. This is God's wisdom. This is God's brilliant way of showing the love of Christ to Caesar's own household.

So I want you to look at the next phrase. My bonds in Christ are manifest. Another way of saying this is the reason for my imprisonment became undeniable. It was very clear why I am here, why I'm bound up to these chains was this that it made manifest to me and to you that the entire Praetorian guard now understood the purpose of Paul's presence. They all understood that it wasn't because of Caesar but it was because of Christ. You see that my bonds in Christ. There's a passage, right? We don't serve man, but who? We serve God. And so this we see undeniable truth. My bonds are in Christ. God allowed this to happen. And he's saying my presence here is important. I'm not going to diminish the importance of this.

And so it's accorded in book of Acts actually in chapter 28:16 that we get a glimpse of this. He says that the Lord Jesus Christ permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier that kept him. So essentially I'm hooked up to a soldier around the clock. And that's the instrument that God is using for the furtherance of the gospel.

Okay. And so Paul makes mention of this burden of being constantly chained day and night to uncivilized soldiers. But he's not again speaking anything bad about the situation. He's just saying I'm just hooked up. That's all. You don't need to know anymore. I'm just hooked up to this person. Okay. And then so the constant company and by the way I was thinking man if I was hooked up you know what would my devotional life look like? How will my personal time with the Lord look like that's it's no more personal anymore. I have literally a person with me. And despite of that, despite of someone being hooked up, he brushes that awkward situation that he can still be intimate and have sacred times of fellowship with the Lord even while he's hooked up.

I just thought about that. It's not in the scriptures, but I just thought, man, what if you had just someone just always there watching what you're doing non-stop, literally watching and observing you 24 hours a day. You know, we're so worried about cameras watching everything that we do. Well, Paul already got that taste of it, right? So, just kind of bring things to perspective. We're so worried about so many things and yet Paul's like, "Don't worry. Don't worry about that. You can still have intimacy with the Lord."

And so, here's a necessary clarification. By the way, I need to make this point because I did share in my first sermon that he was in a dark dungeon and he was by himself. I need to make that correction. He wasn't by himself. That's actually when he wrote second Timothy when he was in a dark dungeon by himself and he actually expresses the loneliness and he asked can you bring some warm clothes and books because it's a different scenario in that situation.

But here I need to clarify he was imprisoned and he was essentially under house arrest. And this is the thing is if the Philippians didn't help pay for that stay in that place, he would have probably been in a dark dungeon. But yet he was because he paid his way to be in that house arrest, that arrangement permitted him to essentially have visitors come and go. So we're going to see that in later in Philippians where Epaphroditus came and was able to take the letters and share it and distribute it to the church. And so he had continual ministry in this particular context where he wrote this particular letter. So I wanted to make that point to clarify.

So this incredible reality that Paul faced and thought that this accompaniment of these soldiers with him every time was an opportunity to share the good news with new guards arriving to sit

behind him. And so he would remember, I spoke with that person, I spoke with that person, I spoke with that person, I spoke with that person. And he can say, I spoke with all the people in the palace. You see that? He had a perspective like I'm gonna determine to speak with every single one and I'm going to know each one by name as it were. Isn't that a worthy goal? Do we think like that? Like I want to reach as many people for the gospel as possible.

So think about it. There's so many applications here already in the text, isn't there? And so he wanted people to listen and while they're sitting there and he wanted to be the best witness for Jesus Christ there, right? He didn't want to share his predicament of his worries and his problems. He's just good news, good news. I'm good. The Lord is with me even here. And so they knew that, wow, this man is unique because they're used to people coming in doing all sorts of crimes for their punishment. And yet this man is being punished for speaking something and something amazing to some of them. I think got a hint like this man, he doesn't deserve this. I mean, these men are smart. They're elite soldiers. They must have picked up on that.

And so he's just going, I want to make sure I am not dumbing this down for them. I want to share everything for what Christ is doing in my life. And so he shared the story of Christ. And that's what he says, my bonds in Christ. I want to share why I'm here for Christ and his love for me. And he shared it with all the people there. And this presents a wonderful thing and imagery for us to be passionate earnest and absorbed in our concentration in a singular pursuit of spreading the gospel.

Right? You see success in any field demands specialization and intense focus. Right? Think of doctors, think of engineers, nurses, teachers. You don't just treat it lightly, do you? It's the same kind of demand of focusing and pursuing the good things of the gospel and how to share it. And so he's teaching us how to do that. Because any prerequisite for a deep commitment is your focus and your attention on the thing at hand, right?

And so much like a river must be confined by high banks, right? To flow swiftly and powerfully. We must narrow our efforts for the gospel. In the same way, to be effective, we must focus all the energy that God has in and through us of the Holy Spirit on a single point that the Holy Spirit is trying to convince us. This is the most important message you can ever share.

And I'm sure this point is intensely driven much like the difference between a magnifying glass and a prism, right? A magnifying glass. If you point it to the sun, and you angle it, it's a laser focus and it has intensity, right? But that same sun, same source, you put that on a prism, it's all scattered. And that intensity is just, it's a distraction, isn't it?

And so that imagery helped me to understand Paul's perspective and his understanding of what it means to share the gospel in the right way. You say, "While external restrictions may cause harm," he could have easily thought, "Ah, I'm going to be tortured more if I keep going this way, right?" He could have easily thought about that. I mean, he was himself a murderer, right? He was a persecutor of Christians. He knew what if you were intense, killing is going to happen. And yet, he didn't let those things of fear of harm to his own body be an issue.

Instead, he took those limitations and instead had a clear objective, a deliberate pursuit, an aim that was commendable unto the Lord. And he said, and in a future passage, we know he says it's one thing I do, right?

So, just to kind of share with you what his heart is at is he was dedicated to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And often people who deem success because he was in God's eyesight successful in preaching the gospel. He instead of advancing his what he wanted to do his goals his attention was what does God want to do? What is God's purpose? And he wanted to be useful to that end. Right?

And so when it's with his intense focus applied to Christ and his work is that individual seen rather of an example to emulate? Do you want to emulate a person like that or do you think oh that's too much Paul. He didn't even think about that when he was sharing this part of the passage with the Philippians. He just wanted to go beyond that fear.

And so the very same level of concentration, by the way, is lauded by the world, right, when directed to important secular goals and is often dismissed as fanatical when it's applied to Christians. You ever hear people say, "Why are you so like going for what God wants to work through you?" It's to people in the world, they think you're fanatical. They use words like that. You're crazy. What are you doing? Like how does it help you, right? That's a common expression.

But you see, Paul doesn't even care about that. He's not concerned about what other people think. He cares about the concerns of spreading the gospel. And so, he's not ashamed about what he's doing. He's not distracted by the world, but he's captivated and he's pulled away to the path of being more Christlike. You see that?

And so Paul's was unique in his ability to view his circumstances this way that every Christian is called to adopt this perspective. The things which happened unto and you can say your name there. Can you do that? Can you say the things which happened unto myself? Anthony, can I make it light and instead put more emphasis on the furtherance of the gospel? You can do that to your own life. Apply this to yourself. Is that your context right now?

So we will only understand our experiences correctly as God does when we judge them by this kind of potential and to benefit our spiritual lives for the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

Verse 14, look down at verse 14 says, "And many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds are much more bold to speak the word without fear." You see the sight of Paul's constancy of drawing his attention away from himself to drawing his attention on the things of Christ. Paradoxically actually didn't cause him to be more fearful but actually to become more bold.

And so this is the idea that waxing confident means increasing in confidence. Right? So that's just a great comfort for me as a preacher and I hope for you too that actually the more bold you are in preaching the gospel there will be more people on your side for the cause of Christ. God will put people in your life like he did with Paul. You see, people didn't run away from him when

this letter came to him. They actually rallied harder because they knew that this was the right approach to be bold for the gospel.

And so he calls them the brethren in the Lord. See, these brethren lost their fear and were instead heartened to the preaching more abundantly of the gospel. See, Paul's imprisonment motivated other believers to take up the work of evangelism. Sharing the gospel is a responsibility of all of us as believers. No one is exempt of this. And so he says, "Brethren, this is for you all."

And so he says, "However, internal struggles can sometimes act as barriers and inferiority conflicts can make some believers feel less competent than most prominent teachers." Well, that wasn't an issue with Paul because he was in prison. That they had no one to physically compare with. He was just comparing it with his word.

So how many times of us get distracted by oh this brother is doing more for cause oh I want to do more instead of what does the lord want for you and according to his word and you compare yourself with his word. Amen. That's how we should do. That's what these brethren did. They took his word and like yes lord I want to do the same.

You see that way there's no hindrance in serving the Lord with your own gift. God sometimes orchestrates the movement of experiences to other areas so that you can grow in the Lord. And may I just be that for you all. Like don't ever compare yourself with me. Compare yourself instead with what God has for you. Amen. That should be main encouragement. I want you to focus on this word and how it's speaking to you through the Holy Spirit and fulfill your calling, brethren. Fulfill your calling. That should be our standard. It's a word of God.

Let's look at verses 15 to 17. Now, Paul identifies a painful reality that not everyone preaching Christ was doing so from a pure heart. We see this in these three verses. We see one group that's envy and strife that they're doing out of this motive. This heart posture, this attitude. Essentially, they were jealous and they were selfish in their ambition in preaching the gospel. They were pretending. They weren't actually with Paul. They were just preaching so they can elevate themselves.

Again, that's why I shared earlier, don't compare yourself with somebody because that's what they were doing. They're envying a strife. Look at how Paul, look at how great I just want to be like him. And they totally missed the point. So that's one group that they're motivated to preach with mixed feelings, not pure motives.

And so some were driven by envy, wishing they had Paul's influence that they were as popular as Paul or as successful as Paul in the eyes of man and resenting the favor he enjoyed. And it was grace, right? So it's unmerited favor. Amen.

Others acted out of strife. And what is this? Is they were fueled by selfish ambition, rivalry, who can be better at preaching the gospel to more people. How many salvation stories can we get? None of that. Amen. No, it's a secret thing that the Lord does in our hearts. The results are up to the Lord. It's not doing this thing quickly. Amen.

But God's timing to not have this competitive spirit that introduced quarreling and division among the immature believers at Philippi. And with this, they were both hoping to add affliction to Paul's bond. He's saying he's adding more affliction to me. You're this is not actually pleasing to me at all. And so, he just shares it that way. And notice the wording of Paul. He's not saying like you're hurting me, but he's adding more afflictions to his bonds. Takes even his eyes off of himself in this situation.

And then we have this other group of goodwill. These are ones that are preaching from a place of agape love. The one that Paul prayed that you may abound much more in. Remember that this is agape love that the benefit will be to others, not to yourself. Not envying, not strife, but for others. This heart posture of agape, love, self-sacrifice, knowing that Paul was appointed by God's will for what it says their defense of the gospel. They knew the heart of Paul's life was he wanted to defend the gospel. Not to defend themselves, but the gospel. Amen.

And then let's close at verse 18. Verse 18. In verse 18 here it says we see a display of spiritual maturity. You want to arrive at spiritual maturity. This is it. Verse 18. You see Paul brushes aside personal attacks and refuses to be bitter towards his critics. The envy and strife group. He refuses to acknowledge them. He says in not this I mean he acknowledges them but he doesn't go into it. Does that make sense? He just shares this is the group. Okay, just notice them. But that's it.

And so he says this. He says, "What then?" It literally is like, "What should I do then with this information? What do you want me to do? What do you think? What do you think I'm going to say?" Okay, that's the kind of question mark for us to pause in. What do you think Paul's going to say? What do you think Paul's going to do? And then with that, what whatever answer you came up with, let's hear what Paul does with that. Amen. And see where your gap is. Let's see where what we think and what does actually Paul think of this matter.

You see, he concludes that so long as Christ is proclaimed, he will rejoice. Amen. He will rejoice. You see, victory over self is where he wants everyone to be at. He refused to spend his time in circular letters writing back and forth. Watch out for this brother. Watch out for this sister or don't be like this or don't be like that. He doesn't do any of that. He's like, nope. I'm going to leave it to the Lord. God will show them. God will show him her and everyone else.

Instead of defending his own integrity, his only concern was the victory over the message, the gospel. You see this essential focus that he had was his only concern was that Christ is preached. Amen. That Christ is preached. Whether the motive was pretense that they were pretending or in pure motive in truth, the result was the same. The music of Christ's name was sounding out clear and full. It was that's Paul's words.

Paul understood that God honors the truth of his word rather than the organization or the man. It's the message. Amen. And so Paul's reaction is found with full joy. He's going, they're preaching the gospel. They're proclaiming it. They're imperfect. I'm imperfect. Let's not get stuck in our ways. Instead, keep preaching, brothers. Keep preaching, sisters.

He trusted in God's sovereignty that God will work things out in every situation for good. After all, this is the man who wrote Romans 8:28. Amen. That all things, even this, work together for good to all them that love God and are called according to his purpose.

You see, he goes on and he doesn't just say, "I'm rejoicing in this situation." But notice he ends with yay and will rejoice. This is in continual tense. I'm going to continue rejoicing in this. So it's not just a one situation moment. It's every situation. If this is the way it's going to go, then this is the way it's going to go because ultimately God is sovereign. He can work it out.

This doesn't that give immense peace and just assurance that as long as we know the word of God and we're preaching it faithfully the results are up to him not up to Paul not to me not to you. Amen.

So let us have that continual rejoicing that Paul had a perspective a mindset he adopted to rejoice in all things and to continue to rejoice. This is pursuing the excellent path by the way that I preached from last week. This was the excellent way. It might be not according to your measure, but to him that prayer was answered. This is the most excellent way for the word of God to be spread.

So Paul's experience in these verses is the ultimate fulfillment of the prayer for excellence he offered in verses 9 and 11. That love would abound in knowledge and discernment that he showed that a person who considers Christ to be everything will not settle for anything less than the best even in the worst conditions.

The Apostle Paul teaches us that no obstacle can halt the progress of God's word. History reveals that if Paul had not been imprisoned, we might not have the prison epistles, namely Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, which continue to further the gospel today. Amen. That we get to read from this letter. He could have stopped writing. He didn't. Amen. Nothing stopped him for the furtherance of the gospel and the message that trials are instruments. That trials are instruments.

Like the Philippians who stood beside Paul in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. We must see that God uses even our bonds. Okay. What are your bonds? To open new roads for his word. See your chains may be the very path God is clearing for the gospel to advance in your workplace or in your family or maybe if you're in a hospital stay in that hospital setting that that is an open field.

If you would just adopt this mindset that I want to reach as many people for the gospel to reach as many people so they will never be able to say I didn't hear the message from that man or that woman to reject the mediocrity to not just go for the good but for the best for the excellent things.

That a life centered on Christ is not settled for the good but pursues the absolute best which is the glorification of Jesus in every circumstance. This means choosing what is excellent in our daily walk, our speech, right? And our reactions to those who oppose us. God, help me not to react by my instincts, but help me to respond with your word and loving kindness. That is so much more harder, isn't it?

In fact, it's impossible. Without Christ's love shedding in your hearts first, it is impossible. You pray like that, God will humble you. And so the source of life is to remember the analogy of the branch and the vine. But the branch does not struggle to produce fruit. It remains connected to

the source the vine just like Paul has joy and continual joy not based on his own effort but because of the supply of the spirit in him because of Jesus Christ living in him. It is him that's flowing through us.

And we can rejoice whenever Christ is preached, trusting that the spirit of God will bless his word even when it is delivered by imperfect people like you and I. Like Paul, may we develop Christlike love that prioritize the spiritual well-being of others. Whether we are in seasons of freedom or restriction resulting in lives rich with the fruits of righteousness that brings glory and praise to God.

May we like Paul maintain an absorbing purpose to magnify Christ in all things stressing that our circumstances are always in the sovereign hands of the Lord. May God bless us to this end. Amen.

Let us pray. Father, you are so good to us. These words of Paul reveal so much, Lord, of where his heart was, where his affections were tied to, not to the things of this world, not to his circumstances, but connected to the vine, the true source of the spirit of life in Christ.

Lord, I pray that this message, Lord, as I was giving it, Lord, that you would have spoken to each and one of us by your spirit this morning, wherever each one of us may be, Lord, I pray that we will grow from there. For brothers and sisters in Christ, we be more desiring to spread the gospel in the situations that they're in.

And I pray for those that don't know your son. Lord, I pray for them as well that you will reveal to them because they don't have the connection with the source of life which is thy son Jesus Christ. This is the reason why their life is the way it is. This is why the gospel has no impact personally in their own lives and they don't see it in others.

I pray father that you will reveal that they need to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. That only he can save them from the situation that they're in. And that as your word says, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. I pray, Father, that you would speak this truth in their lives.

It's not performance that you're looking for, God. You are the one that performs perfectly everything. You don't need anything from us. We need everything from you, even salvation. Father, may you bless to this end, I pray, bring about true salvation only that you can do. And we'll thank you, Father, for working in both those who are believers and unbelievers here this morning. And we'll thank you in Jesus name. Amen.^{od}'s word. History reveals that if Paul had not been imprisoned, we might not have the prison epistles, namely Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, which continue to further the gospel today. Amen. That we get to read from this letter. He could have stopped writing. He didn't. Amen. Nothing stopped him for the furtherance of the gospel and the message that trials are instruments. That trials are instruments. Like the Philippians who stood beside Paul in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. We must see that God uses even our bonds. Okay. What are your bonds? To open new roads for his word. See your chains may be the very path God is clearing for the gospel to advance in your workplace or in your family or maybe if you're in a hospital stay in that hospital setting that that is an open field. If you would just adopt this mindset that I want to reach as many people for the

gospel to reach as many people so they will never be able to say I didn't hear the message from that man or that woman to reject the mediocrity to not just go for the good but for the best for the excellent things. That a life centered on Christ is not settled for the good but pursues the absolute best which is the glorification of Jesus in every circumstance. This means choosing what is excellent in our daily walk, our speech, right? And our reactions to those who oppose us. God, help me not to react by my instincts, but help me to respond with your word and loving kindness. That is so much more harder, isn't it? In fact, it's impossible. Without Christ's love shedding in your hearts first, it is impossible. You pray like that, God will humble you. And so the source of life is to remember the analogy of the branch and the vine. But the branch does not struggle to produce fruit. It remains connected to the source the vine just like Paul has joy and continual joy not based on his own effort but because of the supply of the spirit in him because of Jesus Christ living in him. It is him that's flowing through us. And we can rejoice whenever Christ is preached, trusting that the spirit of God will bless his word even when it is delivered by imperfect people like you and I. Like Paul, may we develop Christlike love that prioritize the spiritual well-being of others. Whether we are in seasons of freedom or restriction resulting in lives rich with the fruits of righteousness that brings glory and praise to God. May we like Paul maintain an absorbing purpose to magnify Christ in all things stressing that our circumstances are always in the sovereign hands of the Lord. May God bless us to this end. Amen. Let us pray.

Father, you are so good to us. These words of Paul reveal so much, Lord, of where his heart was, where his affections were tied to, not to the things of this world, not to his circumstances, but connected to the vine, the true source of the spirit of life in Christ. Lord, I pray that this message, Lord, as I was giving it, Lord, that you would have spoken to each and one of us by your spirit this morning, wherever each one of us may be, Lord, I pray that we will grow from there. For brothers and sisters in Christ, we be more desiring to spread the gospel in the situations that they're in. And I pray for those that don't know your son. Lord, I pray for them as well that you will reveal to them because they don't have the connection with the source of life which is thy son Jesus Christ. This is the reason why their life is the way it is. This is why the gospel has no impact personally in their own lives and they don't see it in others. I pray father that you will reveal that they need to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. That only he can save them from the situation that they're in. And that as your word says, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. I pray, Father, that you would speak this truth in their lives. It's not performance that you're looking for, God. You are the one that performs perfectly everything. You don't need anything from us. We need everything from you, even salvation. Father, may you bless to this end, I pray, bring about true salvation only that you can do. And we'll thank you, Father, for working in both those who are believers and unbelievers here this morning. And we'll thank you in Jesus name. Amen.