

Philippians 1:12-20

Courage for Continuing in the Faith

Image Church // Philippians week 2

MPS: Paul's going to show us how the gospel advances

Introduction

Well, good morning Image family! If you have your bibles go ahead and grab it and turn to the book of **Philippians**, that's where we're going to be this weekend...

Well, it's hard to believe but we've now been in quarantine for almost a month and a half, *which I know feels like a year for some of you...*

Like many of you Ashley and I are trying to figure out this new normal... I think for the first part of all this we viewed it more like a blizzard that we were trying to make it through, and now it's becoming more of a reality that this isn't a **blizzard**, it's more like a **mini ice age** where we have to move past survival to adaptation...

Which means that we've taken more walks in the evenings in a week then we have sense we've lived in our house... In fact It's turned into my workout plan- *pushing stroller with two in it ain't no joke!*

Like many of you mom's, my wife's been in creative overdrive with the kids trying to switch up their environments, but only having so many options...

All of my meetings have moved digital, Community Group is digital, and I'm thankful for things like Webex, Zoom and Facetime, but it's just not the same... *For those of you extroverts I know you feel me on that...*

And for those of you **introverts**, this isn't easy on you either because *you're getting wore out by the extroverts that live with you...*

I know one of the things I've realized is that it's been harder to unplug because there's no transition, no commutes now, everything's so accessible and available through my phone...

I know for many of you, you're trying to find the right place to work, trying not to get frustrated- If you're like me this time has heightened your lack of patience even more... I feel like it's a whole lot easier to see some of my short comings during this time...

We're all just trying to figure things out...

Even when it comes to what we're doing this morning, this is so different, *it's been challenging for me to figure out how to connect with you solely through a camera...*

I'm grateful that we have this digital platform, but all this has been such a reminder that this isn't how God designed church to be, He designed it to gather together in person... Singing and preaching were designed to be **corporate**...

Life-together as the church was meant to happen for real and not through a screen...

But even in the midst of this, our goal, and our mission is still the same, we want to grow in of love and knowledge of God, and we want to make that love and knowledge of God know to others- and so even though the method is different out mission stays the same...

And what we're going to see and we continue to dive into the book of Philippians is that Paul's going to challenge us to that end...

I told you last week that ***the book pf Philippians is all about Christian maturity***- about what it means to *not only* be a Christian, but what it means to grow as a Christian...

And Paul does this really in two ways throughout his letter to the church in **Philippi**...

Paul's going to give some encouraging and challenging directives...
But he's also going to give us a model in his life...

IOW: Some of the things will be **explicit**, clear instruction from Paul... and other things will be **implicit**, as we look at Paul's life as an example as he talks about what he's going through and how, how he's navigating, and what God's doing...

Which is what we're going to see today... *so let's pick up in Philippians chapter 1 verse 12...*

Philippians 1:12-20

12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has **actually advanced the gospel**, **13** so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ.

Remember, Paul's writing this letter from prison... And what we see here is that it's clear that the sole reason why he's in prison is because he's a **Christian**...

- *You think you have a it hard as a Christina, you got nothing on Paul!* There's no threat of jail for you because you're a Christian... And honestly prison was the mildest form of persecution that he faced!

And yet in the midst of the persecution, and opposition that Paul's facing, it actually serves to advance the gospel!

- This is unreal... Paul's in prison- chained up locked up and my guy is sharing Jesus with everybody in or around the prison...
 - o **Flesh out...** *The people that guard Paul (each shift), the person who feeds Paul, Person who takes out trash...*

Alright, let's keep reading... **Verse 14** Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word, fearlessly. **15** To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. **16** These preach out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the

gospel; **17** the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment.

So, not only does his situation serve as a chance to advance the gospel inside where Paul is, but it also boosted the confidence of other believers on the outside!

You have one group of people that were watching Paul's situation, the way that he had given up his freedom for the sake of the gospel, and they **dared even more** to speak the word **fearlessly**...

I love this: They were more motivated, bold and courageous than ever!

And then you have another group of people were preaching the gospel but they were self-seeking, they wanted to make a name for themselves, to be recognized like Paul...

What we see is that this second group of people had the wrong motives...

One thing to make sure that you notice here, this is important- Paul doesn't say that there was a **doctrinal problem** with what they're preaching, he shows us that there's **a heart problem** inside those who are preaching... They wanted to rival Paul...

But listen to what Paul says:

18 What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice.

Now, we have no idea why Paul felt the need to put this little section about *people trying to rival him* in there... But what we get a glimpse into is the additional troubles that he's facing...

And yet, Paul doesn't care that these guys have something against him and that some of them are trying to stick it to him, even cause him trouble... **He just cares that the gospel is being preached!**

Notice that Paul's willing to lay down his personal feelings, social standing, and the approval of man for the sake of the gospel being proclaimed... He says, *I can rejoice in that!*

Then Paul continues... in **verse 18**: Yes, and I will continue to rejoice **19** because I know this will lead to my salvation [or deliverance], through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. **20** My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

Now, let me say this before we jump into applying... **Why did Paul write this?** This is going to help us better understand the context of this letter as we continue forward...

Paul's wanted to encourage the Philippians as they endure their own suffering... Remember, Philippi was a Roman colony where you're free to worship any **god** that you want as long as you don't claim that your God is the only God, and as long as you worshiped the Emperor...

It was a city that was home to a bunch of retired military soldiers and known for its patriotic nationalism...

So, for the Philippian Christians to claim that **only Jesus is Lord**, in such a Roman-centered culture would have gotten them persecuted...

And Paul's **empathizing** with them in their suffering, and showing them how the gospel's advancing through his suffering **in Rome** where he's in prison...

- That the Lordship of Jesus is prevailing- through Paul the gospel's penetrating the center of the Roman political world!¹

Alright, now let's look at **3 things** that I want you to see in these **8 verses**... **3 very practical applications** for us in light of the model Paul gave us...

1. The culture will oppose Christianity (v.13)

Paul's in prison because he's a Christian... He hadn't broken any laws, he hadn't done anything wrong- he was being oppressed and opposed **solely because he's a Christian**...

The church in **Philippi** is being opposed because they're Christians and they believe that Jesus is Lord, and **not the Emperor**...

So, both **Paul** and the church in **Philippi** chose to follow Jesus instead of culture, and the culture's combating it against it...

Let me just stop right here and ask you this: ***Is your life predominantly composed of following Jesus or culture?***

One of the ways you can know that you're following Jesus is by the opposition that you face from culture... **Maybe ask it like this: what are the ways that culture calls you into question** because of the way that you're following Jesus?

- Why did you apologize that coworker?
- Why don't you want to be dishonest with the numbers here do you understand what this could mean for us!?
- Why are you not getting hammered tonight with everyone else are you serious- you too good for us?
- Why don't you just buy that?
- Why did you do that for him/her- nobody likes them...
- Did you just pray with that person?
- Why did you start this bible study?
- It's just a trip, who cares that you're not married?
- Why do prioritize that church stuff so much?
- Why are you not sleeping with your girlfriend?
- I don't understand why yall aren't living together??
- Why are you always helping people?
- You genuinely care about people don't you?!?

Being a Christian is a call to surrender your life to the Lordship of Jesus, He defines how you live, and you follow Him, and you Submit

¹ Fee, G. D. (1995). *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (p. 114).

to Him... Jesus redefines, and reorients the lives of those who've put their faith in Him...

And when that happens our culture will take notice- it will oppose and call into question the fruit of Christianity...

But here's the problem, I think more often than not **Christians look so much like culture that culture can't even tell...**

And so, the reason why we don't face opposition is because we're not actually living any different than the secular culture around us...

I want you to think about something... If we weren't in this COVID-19 situation, and we went to the **Wal-Mart parking** lot, *everything happens there*, and per-usual it was packed, and we got out of our cars and *I just started chasing you around the parking lot- you think people would notice?*

- You could argue *no because it's Walmart- but work with me here...*
- Of course they would notice me chasing you up and down the side walk!!

Listen, the same is true when we're running after Jesus- **people will notice**- they can't help but notice, and just like if we were running around at Wal-Mart people are going to call you into question based on the way you're living...

- *If I showed up at your workplace/in your neighborhood and told your coworkers and neighbors you're a Christian...*

But here's the reality, I think the reason why many of us are not really running after Jesus, the reason why we don't really look that different is we've forgotten the implications of the gospel...

- *Flesh out gospel...*

We don't run after Jesus because we want to acquire salvation, we run after Jesus because He's given us salvation!

And in the process like Paul and like the church in Philippi we will encounter opposition in some capacity, that's ok, it's actually a good thing!

In fact, I would say if you're not getting pushback or called into question because of the way you're living, **then you should ask yourself if you've really surrendered your life to Jesus**, or if it's just been more of an *affiliation thing*.

- Jesus was clear that following Him meant that the world would oppose you (John 15:19) ...
 - o *If you're of the world the world loves you, but because Christians are **not** of the world, the world will hate you.*
- He told His disciples they would be hated (Mark13:13)

If Jesus is Lord of your life then the culture will oppose you.

Let's look at the second thing that we need to see...

2. God turns obstacles into opportunities (v.12-14)

Paul says in verse 12: that what['s] has happened has actually advanced the gospel... The word **advance** or **progress**: is a word in the original language that paints a picture of *pioneers cutting a way before an army...*²

- IOW: God's not *just making a way* here, He's blazing a trail!!

What seems like an **obstacle** here for Paul, serves as a highway for the gospel!

And here's what I want you to see here, **two things** in this, the **first** is that prison itself serves as an avenue for Paul to advance the gospel...

And the **second**, is that God uses Paul's perseverance in prison as a means to motivate others to boldly preach the gospel...

² Hawthorne, G. F. (2004). *Philippians* (Vol. 43, p. 43).

- **IOW:** People are watching how Paul's pressing on in the midst of major opposition, in the midst of a major obstacle, and they're motivated in a big way!

Now, for Paul, he's being persecuted for his faith, and so the **obstacle** that he's facing, *prison*, is a direct result of him living out his faith and culture opposing it and oppressing him...

The same will be true for us, there will be times when the obstacles that you face are a direct result of how you're living out your faith, where culture opposes and oppresses you, maybe even persecutes you...

Or maybe there's additional challenges that culture puts on you that creates an obstacle for you as it relates to living out your faith...

Maybe it's just natural circumstantial obstacles that you're facing...

So, let me apply the truths that we see here in **2 ways**:

A. God creates personal opportunities for you to advance the gospel in the midst of obstacles that you're facing

Paul's in prison and he shares the gospel with the entire imperial guard!

What obstacle are you facing?

- Is it COVID-19?
- Have you been limited by your job on what you can do/say as it relates to your faith?
- Are you in a tough place right now financially?
- Did you not get the job you wanted or the promotion you were after?
- Maybe it's uncertainty about the future...
- Maybe it's specific bondage or oppression that you're facing right now as a result of your faith...

What obstacles are you facing in your life right now???

Obstacles create some of the greatest opportunities, stretching you in your faith, challenging you to set your hope on God, to depend on Him for power and intervention...

It pushes you to pray and take intentional steps of faith trusting God in the shaky uncertainty **as you look for ways to hold up Jesus**.

Listen, when we face obstacles in this life, we can't just wave the white flag and give up... What if you saw the **obstacle** as something that God was allowing in order for the gospel to advance through you!

- Had Paul not gone to prison, the guards wouldn't have heard the gospel...

God often uses what seems to be an obstacle as an opportunity for you to advance the gospel!

- And they tend to be some of the best opportunities because **your voice is always louder in the face of an obstacle!**

What if we believed God the way Paul did? What if we looked for opportunities like he did? What if we were asking how can I use what I am facing to point people to Jesus...

Here's the other part of this:

B. God uses your perseverance through obstacles to motivate others in the gospel

There were other Christians watching Paul go to prison for His faith, and instead of scaring them, it motivated them to boldness like never before!

So not only does the gospel advance internally, but it advances externally as well!

People watch how we deal with opposition and obstacles... Do we give up, do we give in, do we quit?

The revelation of what we really believe often comes out in the face of challenges...

It's because Paul held strong in his faith that others were motivated in theirs!

Let me ask you this: **how many people are motivated in their faith because they've watched yours in action?**

- How many people are pointing to you saying it's because of his/her boldness in the gospel that I was motivated to be bold in mine??

I think many of us have come to a place where we're **timid with our faith**... We've forgotten the power of the message, and the implications it has the hearers...

And instead of people feeding off our boldness, they're feeding off our timidity...

What would it look like if we picked up the **gauntlet of our faith**- and we began to boldly and audaciously run after Jesus?

And that leads me to the last thing that I want you to see from our text today... For Paul,

3. The goal of the Christian life is that Christ glorified in everything (v.18-20)

Paul says in **verse 20** **My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.**

When Paul uses the word **body** right there, the original language shows us that what Paul's pointing to, is that his *entire existence, is aimed at one goal, that of bringing praise to Christ.*

Paul is devoted to Christ, and his desire is that Christ would be honored, or glorified, or magnified, in his life regardless of the circumstances that he faces...

That is why Paul's able to endure opposition that's why Paul shares the gospel with the people that chained him up...

For Paul, everything was about Christ...

- **V. 13** my imprisonment is for Christ
- **V 15-18** talking about people who are preaching Christ out of different motives- but what's most important, is Christ and that he is proclaimed- that's what makes him rejoice
- **V. 20** I just want Christ to be glorified and honored in my body

Paul has **confidence** and **unwavering hope** in the midst of his circumstances, and He wants the same thing to be true for the **church in Philippi** – that Christ would continue to be their life and that even though they're facing opposition, and the future seems uncertain, that if Christ is central in their lives then they too can have a hope and a confidence to continue forward!

See for Paul, it's not about **popularity or prosperity, it's not about success, it's about Christ!**

- There's nothing wrong with those things in-and-of-themselves but they're not the main things...

What if this was really true for us, it would change everything!

It would mean that we care more about **sharing the gospel** than we do about getting that promotion...

It means that the **primary motivation for our job** is to honor Christ in the way that we work, and the way that we share Jesus at work...

It means that for the **Parents** the goal isn't milestones it's the message of Jesus

It means that Christ is the one who shapes how we **steward our finances**...

It means that Christ shapes how we approach **relationships, marriage and dating**...

- That the goal is glorifying Him!

It means that Christ shapes how we interact with our neighbors and our involvement in a local church...

The goal listen is that Christ is glorified!! It doesn't matter that culture opposes you, it doesn't matter that you face obstacles... What matters is that Christ is glorified in you and through you!

Conclusion [VAMP]

And the only way you'll ever be motivated toward that end is through the gospel!!

- *High level walk through*
- Remember it, and believe it!

Is Christ exalted in you and through you?

- In you- you were dead in your sin you have been made alive
- Through you- the gospel overflows out of you to others...

Outtakes

For us, we live in a culture that says **your life is ultimately defined by you**... Follow your heart, do what you feel is right and what's best for you... Live your best life now, and only you can determine what that looks like, do whatever makes you happy, you have freedom, walk in that freedom in whatever way you please- it's your life you do what you want...

But Christianity teaches the exact opposite, that *our hearts are more deceitful than anything else*— **Jerimiah 17:9**...

And because of that We've exchanged the truth of God for a lie, choosing to worship and serve *what's been created* instead of the Creator— **Romans 1:25**...

Following our hearts, defining life how we want to define it, going after the things of this world and the ways of this world, choosing to live how we want to live, living out our fleshly desires, and because of that we deserve the wrath of God for our rebellion— **Ephesians 2:1-3...**

See, ***the core of our problem is the cry of our culture***, that *life is defined by me...* This claim rejects God, and functionally it means that you're claiming lordship of your life... Which puts you at odds with God...

And yet in the midst of our rebellion and rejection of God, *God proves His own love of us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.* — **Romans 5:8...**

That Jesus, came to fix our heart problem, to redeem us from our rebellion by living perfectly in our place, and then dying the death that was meant for us, taking on the wrath of God so that we didn't have to, and then raising from the dead to offer us new life, restoring the broken relationship that we had with God by giving us His righteousness. — **Romans 5:9-11...**

And Scripture tells us that the work of Jesus is a gift for us to receive... And the way that we do that is by confessing with our mouth, *"Jesus is Lord,"* and believe in your heart that *God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* — **Romans 10:9**

Here's the deal, to be a Christian means that you respond to the grace and mercy of God through Jesus by surrendering... That you no longer sit on the throne of your life, Jesus does, ***that He's now the Lord of your life***, that He's your King, and that you submit to Him, that you follow Him...

Jesus sacrifice demands that you surrender to receive it