



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

Apparently, the Philippian Church was discouraged by Paul's imprisonment and assumed he was too. This passage is remarkable, for it demonstrates Paul's extraordinary faith and an eternal perspective on his life. He was not discouraged. Despite his imprisonment, God was at work, doing amazing things in Rome!

The Results of His Imprisonment, 1:12-18

Paul's commitment to the sovereignty of God caused him to see his imprisonment through that lens. His suffering had resulted in "the advancement of the gospel." This is a stunning thesis! The term "advance" is a military term, used of preparing a road for the advancement of an army. How could he claim that? He saw two results of this "advance:"

1. v. 13 - The Praetorian Guard and "all the rest" had heard about Christ. In Rome, Paul was under house arrest in a rented facility(see Acts 28:30), but he was chained to Roman guards, members of the Praetorian Guard. [Caesar Augustus had established the Praetorian Guard in 27 BC.] This elite guard was composed of between 9,000 and 10,000 hand-picked soldiers from the legions. Among many other duties, they guarded Caesar's prisoners in 6 hour shifts. The phrase "all the rest"(literally "the remaining ones")no doubt referred to other soldiers, household servants of Caesar, other Roman officials; possibly even Caesar Nero.

2. vv. 14-18 - Paul's imprisonment had encouraged those who had been reluctant to proclaim the gospel: They were "much more bold to speak the word without fear." However, Paul noted that those proclaiming the gospel were comprised of two groups, with two different sets of motives:

- One group proclaimed it out of "envy, rivalry, selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking to afflict me and out of pretense."
- The other "out of good will, love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel, and truth."

Nonetheless, Paul rejoiced that the gospel was being preached; what mattered was the content, not the motive.

The Confidence of His Deliverance, 1:19-26

In this paragraph, Paul detailed another reason for his joy: His “deliverance” (*soteria*). [This term can mean salvation from sin, future glorification or physical deliverance, as from imprisonment.] Paul’s conviction here was sourced in two things: The prayers of the Philippians and “the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” [Remember that the Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son to indwell believers as the sign and empowerment of the New Covenant.] The certainty of his conviction caused Paul to launch into a brief discourse:

- v. 20, No matter what occurs, “now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.” Release from prison would allow him to continue preaching Christ; martyrdom would also advance the cause of Christ.
- v. 21, “to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” What a marvelous perspective about walking obediently with Jesus!
- Vv. 22-24 reflect the tension Paul felt as he contemplated what would happen. He knew that to die was to be with Jesus. Yet, to live was to continue to serve Jesus and to serve the church. His selfless attitude placed his friend’s needs above his own desires.

Verses 25-26 reveal a confidence that he would be released and continue to serve Jesus and that he would join those he loved at Phillipi.

The Certainty of Suffering for Christ, 1:27-30

Regardless of what happened to him, Paul wanted the Philippians to honor and glorify Christ. The phrase “manner of life” is *politeusthe*, which is literally “live as citizens.” Because of Philippi’s unique status as a “little Rome,” citizenship meant a great deal to them. They were, therefore, to represent Jesus as “worthy” citizens of His kingdom. How were they to do this?

- V. 27, by “standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.” They were to be steadfast with oneness of purpose unified in the content of their faith, their doctrine, which they were to preserve and to proclaim.

- V. 28, by not being afraid. That there were opponents of the gospel was a sign of their destruction at the day of God's judgment, but also a sign of the Philippians' salvation, of their security in Christ.

Paul closed with a reminder, rooted in God's sovereignty and His grace: Both their believing in Christ and their suffering for Him were not accidental but part of God's plan; it has been "granted" to you. "Granted" is *echaristhe*, which is derived from the Greek word, *charis*, "grace." In other words, believing in Christ and suffering for Him were associated with his grace! And their suffering paralleled Paul's(v. 30).

Questions:

1. Do you think Paul ever used words such as "coincidence, chance or randomness?" How does this passage reflect Paul's absolute surrender to God's sovereignty? How deep is your commitment to His sovereignty in your life?
2. In vv. 14-18, Paul's comments indicate the importance of content in the proclamation of truth, not the motives of the one proclaiming the truth. How does that reflect the sovereignty of God?
3. Paul's claim "to live is Christ, to die is gain" is absolutely remarkable. Think deeply about this. Does that genuinely reflect the perspective you have about your life?
4. Paul's short discourse on suffering in vv. 27-30 can be disturbing for us in America. How do you understand this? Terms Paul uses, such as "stand firm" and "not frightened," are crucial. "Do not fear" is used 365 times in Scripture. Are you motivated by fear or by enduring trust in Jesus?

—Dr. Jim Eckman