

// / But Also to Suffer

Philippians 1: 14 – 30

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~ The true Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is being preached with the wrong motive today. I deal with false, easy-believism “Christianity” ad infinitum in this present, evil — and very real world all day long. I know the words of Jesus aren’t popular when He said, *“if ye will be perfect, then go, sell all that you have, and give it to the poor so that you may have treasure in Heaven, and then you may follow Me.”* Where were they going to follow Jesus to? To Jerusalem — where the religious rulers were going to murder Him — and would want to kill His followers, too. That’s no prosperity Gospel, my friends; that’s not some sort of motivational speech on leadership — that’s what’s real. If you aren’t able and willing to do exactly as Jesus commanded the rich young ruler then, may I say kindly? — you aren’t following Christ Jesus; because that would, literally, be impossible.

If you haven’t read our previous two reports in our Spiritual Safari, I highly suggest you go back and do so now. Paul has said that the troubles and problems he was having — like being imprisoned in a Roman Mamertine prison — was not hindering the Gospel but, rather, furthering the Gospel. I am sure Epaphroditus brought Paul a letter of deep sympathy and love from the church at Philippi. Naturally, they thought this would be the end of the Gospel going out to the entire world. Well, even as unfortunate, dark and desperate as things seemed to be, they were working out exactly the way God had said they would. God had told Paul that he would appear before kings and rulers; but God had also said that Paul would suffer great things for His Names sake. Both. Well, both of those could not have come together more succinctly, or in any more real of a way, than what was happening at this time in which we are studying....

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

~ At the time in which we are studying, there were many men who desired to go out and preach the Gospel and be witnesses for Christ. However,

having heard of the apostle Paul's teachings, hearing of his sermons, and seeing some of his writings – and knowing he was very effective at spreading the Gospel – they were very much discouraged from going out on their own missionary journeys. As a result, there weren't many people preaching the Gospel in Paul's day. Today, exactly the opposite is true; and I thank God for those who teach sound doctrine properly, correctly and completely – there are a few. Unfortunately, the motive of most so-called Christians today to speak of the things of Christ is self-righteous, self-serving and self-promoting gain. You won't hear them teaching this section of Scripture, friends – because it absolutely contradicts them. Well, at the time in which we are studying, when these people discovered Paul was imprisoned in Rome, I am confident that literally thousands hit the road teaching the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am sure they went door-to-door witnessing. That's when the Gospel began to spread like wildfire!

Now, there is another truth here that we can only glean from the perspective of history; and it is that we have four excellent epistles – Philemon, Ephesians, Colossians and this one, Philippians – that we would not have had if God had not sat Paul down in that prison. Perhaps God could have done it another way – I don't know – but what I do know is that this is the way He did it; so, that means this was the *best* way to do it! All of these things happened for the furtherance of the Gospel. This is where the Word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ just aren't very popular, friends. That brings us to the tragedy of Paul's day, and it just happens to also be the tragedy of this present hour....

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

~ I know it seems almost unbelievable that the preaching of Christ could be done in envy and strife; but, my friends, I have been at this a long, *LONG* time – and I see it happen all the time. Nothing hurts the cause of Christ more than envy and strife. It is always tragic when they appear. We're going to talk a whole lot about envy and strife in this epistle as we move along. Apparently, this is nothing new today. There were many who were envious of the apostle Paul. Some preached the Gospel simply to attempt

to upstage the apostle. Others likely felt as if they couldn't attain quite the same effectiveness. What we all need to do is recognize that we have differing gifts. Not all of us have the same gift. We cannot all be writers, we cannot all be Bible teachers; but the biggest problem is that those who envy the gifts of others feel shortchanged by the Lord – so they do not exercise the gift they *do* have. That's a *HUGE* problem. Only when we exercise our gifts in love can we truly rejoice in our suffering. Again, these are Biblical truths that just don't seem to make it into the pulpit or Sunday school class today.

Envy declares, “.... *I don't think much of you*” – to pride, which asks, “.... *what do you think of me?*” Our Spiritual Safari was repeatedly warned against both of these when we considered the Book of Proverbs. “*Strife*” is an interesting word that means “*stirring up*” – and it is used in connection with demons that stirred up contentions and divisions. Envy always leads to strife – and on to pride. These things hurt the church just as much as anything else does. An atheistic world on the outside of the church doesn't harm the body of the church. Only envy, strife and pride damage the cause of Christ; and that comes from within. Thank God we can rejoice there are still some who preach and teach the Gospel from the Word of God solely in the motivation of goodwill....

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.

~ Interestingly, even the wrong motivations for preaching the Word of God can still bring men and women to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. See, faith is not a product of man or an organization. Even my voice crying in the wilderness from this rinky-dink ministry I so affectionately call the Spiritual Safari — an effort that only has a small handful of readers around the world — can bring blessing to many people's hearts and lives.

However, God only blesses His Word being given out properly, correctly and completely; not theology or doctrine or man-made philosophies of religion. Those things will never be used by God. That's why all I do is give out the Word of God, friends.

That's all I *want* to do; so the Word of God might bless your life – whoever you are reading this report. I think that is all very important to understand. Just like Paul, I have rejoiced, I am rejoicing, and I will rejoice as long as the Lord continues to use me to take the entire Word of God the entire world in the sound doctrine of the apostles. Paul most definitely expected to make his case before Nero, be acquitted and set free – and he expected it to be done through prayer! Well, God did deliver Paul from prison — by calling him home. That is more terribly difficult medicine to swallow, I know that; but, when the Lord is through with us down here, He will, likewise, call us home to be with Him forever....

19 For I know that this shall turn to my physical deliverance from prison 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.

~ Paul wasn't ashamed here; and he didn't want to be ashamed when he entered the presence of the Lord. John tells us that when Christ returns and removes the church from the world, then it is possible to be ashamed at His appearing. Frankly, I believe more Christians should be a whole lot more concerned than they are about that today. There are too many people talking about the coming of the Lord who are not even close to being ready for the coming of the Lord. They may be saved – I don't know – they probably are; but – they're going to be ashamed at His appearing. Why? Because their lives do not commend the Gospel. And they don't know what the Gospel is because they are totally and completely ignorant of the Bible. What is it in this life that you would miss if the Lord called you home tonight, my friend? ~

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

~ Here is Paul's philosophy for living a Christian life. The theme of chapter one is the *philosophy* for living the Christian life; and it all boils down to this one verse. Gain means "*more of the same*" – and, here, that means more of Christ when Paul dies. We're going to be with Christ someday; and it has taken me many years to reach the reality of Christ Jesus in my life. I find that's just not popular today, either. People love to talk about how they're dedicated, and they want to serve God, and all manner of stuff. However, the most important thing in our lives is to have fellowship with Christ. I don't see many desiring that. That's the only way our joy will ever be full. When we have that fellowship *THEN* there will be power and witness and *doing*. Most people go after the end and ignore the means. Well, the means do not always justify the ends — it must be the right kind of means; and that begins with holy fellowship with God the Father through faith in His Son - the Lord Jesus Christ....

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I know 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.

~ If the church were what it should be in this world today, then the lost world would listen — and many people would be saved. That's just not the case, friends. Until we learn to suffer for our faith, we will never be effective for the furtherance of the Gospel. Even with my personal circumstances, which most of you know about, I still have not reached that place where I suffer enough for Him. Most self-professing Christians cannot even fathom suffering for the cause of Christ. In fact, most people think that if there is *any* problem or suffering in our lives *at all* then we must not be saved. What fools — what hypocrites those people really are. God's children suffer, friends — believe that. Paul suffered tremendously; and he did so in order for Christ to be glorified. Victor Hugo so wisely said, "*.... when I go down to the grave I can say I have finished my days work; but I will never be able to say I have finished my life's work. My life's work will begin the morning following my death. The tomb is not a blind alley — but a thoroughfare that closes with twilight and opens again with the dawn!*" That's what Paul is telling us in these wonderful prison epistles. Consider these things, my beloved. Consider the Lord Jesus Christ ~

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