

**Ministry of The Holy Spirit**  
**Prison Letters**  
**Philippians 1:1-14**

**Memorial Day**

John 15:13     **Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**

Last time...in a personal letter to his friend on behalf of his new son in the faith, Paul pleaded for reconciliation between a wronged master (Philemon) and a new creature in Christ set free from the bondage of sin and death (Onesimus)

A very powerful picture of Jesus Christ pleading with His Father for each of us

Last time...the fingerprints of the Sovereign, invisible God directing the steps of people to a glorious conclusion – the salvation of a precious soul

- Paul was exactly where God wanted him at exactly the right time (prison)
- Onesimus, fleeing from his master in Colosse to Rome, was led unbeknownst to him to a “prisoner of Jesus Christ” to hear the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes
- God had softened Onesimus’ heart to receive His gift of salvation

btw...imagine Onesimus delivering Paul’s letter to Philemon and then sitting in the church that met in his house (Philemon 1-2) and hearing from the lips of his master the words Paul wrote on his behalf!  
He would have been blown away – humbled, exhilarated, profoundly grateful and exceedingly comforted in such love!

We have the Word of God...we should be as humbled, exhilarated,  
profoundly grateful and exceedingly comforted in such love!

God’s hand is on our lives as He works all things for good for those who love Him and are the called according to His purpose

We can trust the Sovereign, invisible God in all our circumstances

This time...more comfort and encouragement in trusting the Sovereign, invisible God in all of our current circumstances: the Epistle to the Philippians

- a joyful pouring out of Christian love and gratitude
- counting the cost of following Jesus
- following Jesus in the face of trouble and persecution

## Context

[ map: Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey ]

The Gospel goes to the European continent

Acts 16:6-12

Philippi

- the nearest important Macedonian city to the Roman province of Asia
- named by Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great
- commanding the road between the continents of Europe and Asia, it was the launching point of Alexander's military campaigns to conquer the world
- in the civil war after the death of Julius Caesar, Augustus and Mark Anthony defeated Brutus and Cassius
- made a Roman colony by Caesar Augustus
  - all citizens became Roman citizens
  - all born there are Roman citizens

And then, Good News came to town, carried by the Apostle Paul

- Lydia and her household heard Paul and Silas
- the Lord opened their hearts (Rom 10:17)

What came to the bearers of Good News?

- A damsel possessed with a spirit of divination followed Paul for many days until Paul, grieved of this unwanted witness, cast out the demon... in the name of Jesus Christ
- The damsel's owners, having just lost a very significant source of income, seized Paul and Silas and set them before the town judges
- A near riot broke out and the judges threw Paul and Silas in jail... after they had been beaten
- While Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God (NOT a worldly response to their circumstances but a Spirit-filled response like Acts 5:40-42),
  - a great earthquake
  - all prison doors opened
  - every prisoner's bonds/shackles were loosed
- the prophetic vision comes to pass – the Macedonian man was the Philippian jailer
- he and his family
  - heard and believed
  - ministered to the servants of the Lord, Paul and Silas
- After rubbing the noses of the judges in their illegal treatment as Roman citizens, they fellowshipped with Lydia before moving on

In Paul's ministry, Philippi was a place of

1. fruit...precious new believers in Jesus Christ

2. spiritual resistance, trouble and persecution

- humiliation, stripped bare
- physical beating
- jail time

1 Thes 2:2      we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

3. victory

- a Divine earthquake
- a "jail break" (literally)

4. more fruit...a church planted

Now, from a prison in Rome, Paul is inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this church a letter

Acts 28:30-31    And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

v1      From: Paul and Timothy

Paul is a Roman prisoner, Timothy is ministering to him

The Roman Empire provided nothing to its prisoners except chains

Paul is a "prisoner of Jesus Christ" (Philemon 1)

Paul and Timothy are "servants of Jesus Christ"

What do servants have?

A Master...and nothing else

All things they "have" belong to the Master

"I have a car. I have a home. I have some money. I have stuff."

Nope!

All those things are the Master's; what is mine is to be a faithful steward of the things my Master has entrusted to my care for His use in building His kingdom...and He expects a spiritual ROI on the things entrusted to me

To: All the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi...the church at Philippi  
All saints are “in Christ” and all “in Christ” are saints

the bishops/overseers and deacons/waiters...servants of the saints

Matt 20:25-28 **Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.**

John 13:16 **Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.**

2 Cor 1:24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

1 Peter 5:1-4 the focus of elders, overseers is the flock, not themselves

A “servants to servants” letter

v2 The “stamp” of 16 of the 21 epistles

v3-5 In greeting the beloved brethren in Philippi, Paul

- thanks his God for every remembrance of them brought to his mind...  
he has sweet (not bad) memories of these people and his time with them
- leading him to always prays for them with joy (2 Cor 11:28)

for their *koinonia*/partnership in the gospel, from the days of Acts 16 until now in Acts 28

They have been loving the Lord and each other, living counter-culture lives and sharing the Gospel in difficult times in a difficult place

Paul has joyful, sweet memories from Philippi

It is true: the peace of God that surpasses understanding and protects our hearts and minds thru Christ Jesus (Phil 4:7)

v6 And Paul is confident of this:

God has begun a good work in them

- corporately, as a church
- individually, as parts of the Body

and He will finish that good work, working in and thru them right up to the day when Jesus, having prepared a place for them in His Father's house, returns to receive them unto Himself that where He is they may be also (John 14:1-3)

God always finishes what He starts

Gen 28:15 And, behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.

Ps 138:8 The LORD will perfect *that which* concerneth me

God has begun a good work in you and me, and in us as a fellowship  
And He will complete it until 2 Cor 5:8 or 1 Thes 4:13-17

God's on-going work in us:

John 3:30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

John 15:2 "prunes" us (branches abiding in the True Vine) so we may bring forth more fruit to His glory

Rom 8:28-29 working all things for good to conform us to the image of his Son

Matt 26:39 *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

1 Cor 9:27 keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection

Matt 16:18 *I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

v7-8 the Apostle pours out his heart for this fellowship of disciples of Jesus Christ

Paul says it is right and proper to feel this way (v3-6) because of the special place they have in his heart

After all, they are partners with him in the ministry of the Gospel

- in his bonds/shackles
- in the defense ("apologetics") and confirmation/corroboation/verification i.e. his appeal to Caesar

The church at Philippi is with Paul in prison in Rome as he awaits his hearing before Caesar...they are in his heart

Paul longs for them intensely, God as his witness

As he wrote of the church at Corinth, while in Philippi

1 Cor 4:15     yet *have ye* not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

v9-11   Paul's great desire for the church at Philippi is that they would grow in Christ and finish well

Paul has previously written to the church at Thessalonica

1 Thes 3:12     And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you

In that same spirit, he prays that the Philippians love for the Lord and for each other would grow

- in knowledge...knowing Jesus more and making Him known more
- in all judgment...spiritual discernment and perception, listening to and following the small still voice of the indwelling Spirit of Christ

that they

- could approve/test/prove all things excellent...the things of Jesus Christ and the Gospel of Grace, which is always under attack
- would be sincere/genuine (walk = talk) and without offense/faultless

until Jesus returns to receive them unto Himself that where He is they may be also i.e. all their lifetimes, finishing well their course

- filled with fruit of righteousness

1 Cor 1:30

Jesus, the True Vine, is the Source of spiritual fruit

John 15:1-8

Gal 5:22-25

counter-culture and contrary to worldliness

- to the praise and glory of the Father in heaven

This is their and our part in v6

Grow in Jesus

Walk the talk and talk the walk

Abide in Christ and bear spiritual fruit to the glory of the Father in heaven

Follow Jesus wherever He leads unto the very end

Be Christ-like in our speech and behavior in a very un-Christ-like environment

Prov 11:30

The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; and he that winneth souls *is* wise.

v12-14 Once again we see the fingerprints of the Sovereign, invisible God on people's lives

Paul desires that the church at Philippi would understand a truth:

The result of Paul being imprisoned for boldly preaching the Gospel is...  
the Gospel is being boldly preached more widely!

The Living God is working in and thru the lives of His people stationed in a hostile environment

ala Ex 1:12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

ala Acts 1:8 by Acts 8:1-4...great persecution against the church at Jerusalem and they were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, everywhere preaching the Word

The "engine" of Matt 16:18 was and is persecution resulting from the Gospel being on the offensive

The Lord is proactive, the devil and the world are reactive

The devil and the world are not in control, the Sovereign, invisible God is firmly in control of things, working His will in all the circumstances and choices of people

In Paul's case, the Persecutor viciously hunted the children of God...but God

The Persecutor met the Lord Jesus Christ and became the Preacher

Now, the Preacher is being persecuted...but God is making more preachers!

In the hands of God, his bonds were transformed into a great blessing for many!

The enemy is striving to silence and/or eradicate the kingdom of God...but God is advancing His kingdom, taking back that which the devil stole!

Using the prisoner of Rome, who in reality is the prisoner of Jesus Christ, Jesus is being made known in

- the palace/*praetorium*/Caesar's courtroom  
Just as Obadiah was in wicked King Ahab's house (1 K 18), so were followers of Jesus Christ in influential places in the nest of the Roman Empire
- all other places, throughout Rome and where all roads lead from Rome!

In prison for boldly preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul continued to boldly preach the Gospel while in prison

His preaching was manifest...what he was preaching was true...in that he boldly lived the Gospel in a fishbowl, regardless of the circumstances of his life!

The Gospel of Grace radically changed Paul's life

The Gospel of Grace was radically changing the lives of others

That's how the Gospel of Grace works, and why it is always under attack!

The undeniable evidence that the Gospel is true inspired others to also boldly preach the Truth courageously, to bear light in the darkness without fear

Such is the way of Matt 16:18, fueled by persecution

Acts 4:12      Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Acts 4:19-20   But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Acts 4:29-31   And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Acts 5:29      Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Paul's ministry, preaching and teaching the Gospel of Grace,  
a soldier in the Lord's army "on the offensive",  
yielded both fruit and persecution  
Primarily by the Jews  
But persecution by the Roman Empire was growing

We must remember: What landed Paul in prison?

1. Being faithful to his calling (Acts 9:15-16)
2. Boldly preaching the Gospel of Grace, which always led to trouble (Acts 21:26-40), starting with his personal testimony, which led to more trouble (Acts 22-23)
3. Boldly preaching the Gospel to kings (Acts 24-26)
4. God directing his steps to Rome, with much tribulation (Acts 23:11, Acts 27-28)

What did Paul do in prison?

Boldly preach the Gospel of Grace, in spite of trouble and persecution



What happened as a result?

Others boldly preaching the Gospel of Grace, emboldened to make Jesus known and also  
in spite of trouble and persecution

Acts 20:19-24, moved by the heart of the Father and the mind of Christ

Boldness begets boldness, and it is but for the asking – power from on high,  
the Holy Spirit upon

Also, Scripture was received

Ephesians

Colossians

Philemon

Philippians

In perilous and troubling times and growing persecution toward the people of the God of AI&J,  
Jews and Christians in the Days of Noah and Days of Lot living in the midst of reprobate  
minds and spiraling madness,  
what are we commanded to do?

Be on the offensive

Make Jesus known...boldly preach the Gospel of Grace, expecting trouble and persecution that  
God will transform into blessings for many!

John 15:20    Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord.  
If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you

Bold preaching, by the power of the Holy Spirit upon us to be the witnesses of Jesus Christ,

- in word
  - Word of God, not the doctrines of man
  - with meekness and fear/respect, not arrogance or condemnation
  - trembling, for the lost because it is a fearful thing for an unbeliever to fall into  
the hands of the living God
- in deed
  - fearless, uncompromised living, walking the talk
  - Christ-like lives
  - rejoicing in the Light, Life, and Love of God our Savior

Good News and hope came to Philippi in the form of a faithful ambassador and witness of  
Jesus Christ

Good News and hope come to our towns the very same way...each of us!