



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Surrender: Serving the Savior"
(Pentecost, 2026)
"Peace." Text(s): *Philippians 1.12-30*.

☐ Day #1—Monday, September 21st. Read: Philippians 1.12-13.—Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?

As we go through life, we can either focus on and surrender to our problems, or we can look at them in a way that brings spiritual growth, emotional growth, challenge, and even peace into our lives. We can do this by surrendering our problems to God. Like forgiveness, which we discussed last week, seeking peace, joy, and spiritual growth through our problems by surrendering them to our Lord, are *decisions*—disciplines that can develop over time. When we face problems and challenges and then turn them over to God, we are seeking a *divine solution*. Asking, *what does God want in this situation in my life?* Further, when we look at our struggles from God's perspective, He reveals something about Him that we didn't know—God *grows* our faith, *deepens* our peace, and *uses us* to be an encouragement to other believers and a witness to unbelievers. With God's help, we can turn our problems into purpose.

Beginning with *v.12* in Philippians 1, Paul begins to describe his situation in Rome. As R.R. Melick explains:

Rather than detail the hardships, Paul took a divine perspective. He recognized that all events could be redeemed for the Lord's sake, and he took what advantage he could to continue his mission. The primary concern was that the gospel go forward. This happened through adverse circumstances, but as long as it happened, Paul could be joyful...The gospel advanced. The term "advanced" (Greek: *prokopen*) was used in the Greek-speaking world to describe blazing a trail before an army, the philosophical progress toward wisdom, and the progress of a young minister. Paul, therefore, saw the events as forging new territory for the gospel.¹

When we take on God's perspective in the midst of a problem, we are exercising faith that he has a bigger picture than we are seeing in the moment. In addition, if we are public about our faith, others notice God's work in our lives. Consequently, how we choose to face the challenges in our lives can have a profound witness to unbelievers.

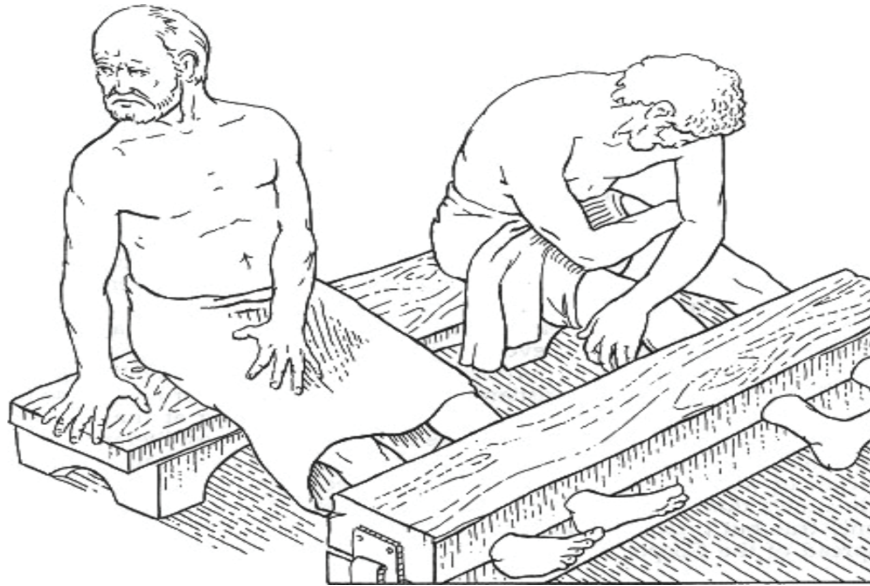
Can you think of an occasion when you were encouraged by watching the faith of another believer in action as they trusted the outcome of their current circumstances to God? Think about what you learned from this believer.

Pray/Consider/Reflect: "Jesus, I pray you would use me to shine your love. Help me truly believe that I have something beautiful to offer this pain-stained world. Lift my mind away from the "peace stealers" in my life, and help me hear only your encouraging voice. Give me your perspective, surround me with people who will pray for me and give me a faith that you will deliver me from my greatest fears. Help me to be at peace. In your precious name. Amen."

☐ Day #2—Tuesday, September 22nd. Read: Philippians 1.14.—Examine: The Text and its Message.

Below is a sketch of Paul and Silas who were imprisoned after a beating Philippi, as described in Acts 16.² This gives just one concept of what imprisonment would have been like in the first century.

¹ R.R. Melick. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991).
² L.O. Richards. *The Bible Reader's Companion* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991).



In v.14, we learn about Paul's sincere belief and desire—that everything in his life be used by God for His glory and the spread of the Gospel. When I read this passage, I asked myself, “Would I really ask God to do whatever He wanted with me if the Gospel is proclaimed through it?” It is a very significant step of faith! Paul believed that because of his imprisonment, the church at large would be bolder and less fearful of what could happen if they preached the Gospel.

Seems counterintuitive? If something bad happens to someone, I will usually not do what he or she are doing. Yet, when it comes to the power of the Gospel, struggle and persecution only spread it! You have likely heard that historically, the church has always grown through persecution. True! There is something about being attacked for what you believe that deepens our faith and we realize that Jesus is worth living AND dying for!

The blessing of the cross is seen in three respects—*a*) The suffering soul becomes free, more joyful, riper, stronger (ver. 19, εἰς σωτηρίαν, comp. 12, 18, 20, 21 sq.), since it becomes more closely united to the Lord, purified from what is earthly and mortal, more intimate with the Eternal Will, and more joyful in it. *b*) Men on every side, Christians (ver. 14), as well as heathen, even Prætorians (ver. 13; Math. 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47), are improved and benefited; for the glory of the peaceful fruit of righteousness becomes better and better known, and the deep need of its possession is felt in the hearts of men. *c*) The gospel secures for itself a recognition of its true character by preaching, which brings to view the person and his history (vers. 12, 20), for thus the adaptation of the gospel to the hearts and lives of men is seen and confessed.³

Consider/Reflect: Even though he was living in miserable conditions, Paul knew his purpose was to build others up in faith. Knowing the key to happiness lies in self-sacrifice rather than self-gratification. Consider today the ways you find joy, peace, and purpose in your life. How does living your purpose add to the progress and joy of others?

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, September 23rd. Read: Philippians 1.15-18.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Paul continues to be thankful that Gospel is proclaimed, even if the motives of the “proclaimers” are less than pure. Paul was more concerned with the advancement of the gospel than his comfort or circumstances. Interestingly, Paul mentions that there were some who were preaching Christ *out of envy, rivalry, and selfish ambition*, along with the desire to make things even more difficult for him in his imprisonment! Who were these people? We do not know for sure. However, some commentators suggest that:

[Paul] recognized and recorded the fact that some Christians were prompted by good will towards him and were challenged to be as faithful as he. Others were interested in success for its own sake. Jealous of Paul, they were determined to show that they could be successful and that the church could prosper without him. How “human” the church, then as now! So there was strife and envy. As disappointed in that as Paul was, he was undaunted in his belief that even confused and impure motives do not annul the power of the gospel. When Christ is proclaimed, the Spirit guarantees the increase.⁴

³ J.P. Lange, P. Schaff, K. Braune, and H.B. Hackett. *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008).

⁴ M.D. Dunnam and L.J. Ogilvie. *Galatians / Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1982).

In addition, D.A. Carson suggests:

Perhaps these were leaders of the church in the place of Paul's imprisonment before he came, and now they were jealous of his reputation because of his apostolic labors, and they were determined to outdo him and only too ready to cause him anguish. Paul was determined not to be provoked or to allow the matter to become one of personalities—all that mattered to him was that *Christ is preached*.⁵

Perhaps, echoing in Paul's mind were Jesus' words: "*Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*" (Matthew 5:11-12 (NASB))

Think of a time when someone in your life was quarrelsome, or seemed to be conspiring against you or competing with you in some way, threatening your happiness. How did you deal with that situation and preserve your joy? Is this happening now? Pray about this. How is it possible to rejoice in the face of difficult people and attitudes?

Consider/Reflect: "Paul demonstrates that his imprisonment does not defeat the Gospel, as some had feared. God's wisdom and love so far surpass our abilities that He can and does still bring the truth of the Gospel to light despite all opposition, just as Jesus fulfilled all righteousness and conquered death by His resurrection... 'Almighty and merciful God, forgive our contrary human nature, and give us grace in every situation to hear and pass on the truth and mercy revealed in Your Word. Amen.'"⁶

□ **Day #4--Thursday, September 24th. Read: Philippians 1.19-26.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

...Paul experienced imprisonment and the threat of death and, from fellow-Christians, animosity and provocation, and yet he was confident that all would turn out well (*cf.* Rom. 8:28). Humanly speaking he relied on the prayers of his friends, and in answer to them the unfailing help of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word translated *help* indicates both a generous provision and an undergirding strength. The assurance of *deliverance* is of the kind described in 2 Tim. 4:18, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom." [Job] 13:16 (and its context) seems to be in his mind. Paul has no confidence in his acquittal by an earthly court. Like Job he is sure of vindication when his case is presented in the heavenly court of appeal'...[v.20] The [Greek] word translated *eagerly expect* means straining forward with outstretched head, and its prepositional prefix implies a turning aside from all other interests. Paul has one supreme ambition: that Christ might be *exalted* in his *body*, living or dying; that Christ might be seen by others more clearly and in his true greatness.⁷

There are four sources of strength outlined in *v.19*. 1) I have God's *perspective* on my problem; 2) I have people praying for me; 3) I have the Holy Spirit helping me; 4) I have faith that God will work it for good! I can choose to *worry and panic* or I can choose to *pray and worship* God in faith.

What is going on in your life right now that you need to see from God's perspective and then live by faith?

Consider/Reflect: How do you fill in the blank: For me to live is: _____. In other words, what sometimes replaces God for the #1 place in your life? How can you keep God first in your life?

□ **Day #5— Friday, September 25th. Read: Philippians 1.27-28.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

For Paul, there is no circumstance or situation that lacked opportunity to bring God glory; no experience of the disciple that cannot be used by God for our blessing.

As we have seen, for Paul, regardless of what would happen to him, good or bad, what he wanted the most was to honor and glorify Jesus! Paul's admonition to "conduct yourselves" translates a political word and concept, which means to "live as citizens." Philippi was a Roman colony. If you were a Roman citizen, you had responsibilities to live accordingly. Likewise, for the Philippian believers, they were to live in a manner that is worthy of the gospel of Christ (*cf. Eph. 4:1*).⁸

5 D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham (Eds.). *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

6 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

7 Carson, et al. *New Bible Commentary*.

8 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

St. Paul was himself a Roman citizen; he was writing from Rome; his presence there was caused by his having exercised the rights of citizenship in appealing to Caesar. He was writing to a place largely inhabited by Roman citizens (for Philippi was a Roman colony), a place in which he had declared himself to be a Roman (Acts 16:37). The metaphor was natural. Some of you are citizens of Rome, the imperial city; live, all of you, as citizens of the heavenly country, the city of the living God.⁹

Consider/Reflect: What is your greatest fear? In moving against what we fear, we find the greatest joy. What can you do in the following days/weeks to refocus on God and his provisions to defeat your fear? Remember, *you are a citizen of the Kingdom of God!*

□ **Day #6-Saturday, September 26th. Read: Philippians 1.29-30. —Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

As he writes from prison, Paul reminds the church that believing in Jesus would result in suffering for Jesus. There is a suffering that comes when a disciple stands for the truth of Jesus and is mocked, ridiculed, and even jailed and/or physically beaten. This is a reality for many believers today and we must pray and act for their safety, release, and care. There is also a suffering that comes when God changes our lives, when He redirects our paths or removes the idols in our lives that are keeping us in spiritual, emotional, and physical bondage. This suffering is actually a sign of God's favor! An old saying goes, "If Christianity was illegal, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" When you express your faith sometimes that will result in suffering. Would you consider it a gift to suffer for Jesus?

The Greek word *echaristhe*, translated "granted" in *1.29*, is derived from the Greek word that means "grace" or "favor." It is the word we use for the *Eucharist*, or Holy Communion. Believing in Jesus, as well as suffering for Him, are both associated with God's grace! Moreover, this divine grace is given to us through God's Word and Sacraments. This is yet another reason why regular attendance in worship and regular time in God's Word are necessary for our spiritual growth and endurance!

Consider/Reflect: "Paul turns his attention from the question of whether he will live or die to a more important issue: what it means to live in this world. If God grants you a day in this world, it is because He would have you serve others by living and speaking in a way that is consistent with (worthy of) the Gospel. Our ability to live this way is a product of the salvation God lavishes on us in the very words we read here and in the Spirit that accompanies those words... 'Dear Lord Jesus, grant us grace and presence of mind to live in a way that agrees with Your Gospel and to strive for advancing the faith in the hearts and minds of others. Amen.'"¹⁰

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...
Sermon Series: "Surrender. Serving the Savior."
Scripture Texts:
Ezekiel 18.1-4, 25-32
Philippians 2.1-4, 14-18
Matthew 21.23-27 (28-32)

⁹ H.D.M. Spence-Jones. *Philippians* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909).
¹⁰ *The Lutheran Study Bible*.