

## **Gospel Knowledge**

Philippians 1:12-20

Pastor Larsen Andrew, January 28, 2019

I do feel a unique connection to this church with having the privilege to work alongside Carl Hargrove and Hohn Cho in the application that you all submitted to Grace Advance, and to get to walk with them and learn from Carl and Hohn. And also, just praise the Lord that you are where you are today, and that the Lord has worked in your midst, and that you have a faithful shepherd and pastor to lead you, and you are rejoicing in the Lord. It is so encouraging to see a healthy church that went through the process of Grace Advance. And now I get the opportunity to preach at. So, it's a blessing to me to see this congregation. I was telling one of the men at the men's retreat, one of your guys, I feel like in some ways, you're long lost family and I'm just now getting to reconnect with you. Because I remember names on applications and all of that. But to get to meet you now, it's a very special thing. So, thank you for having me this morning.

As much as the connection and the history is encouraging to me, you came this morning not to hear about that, but to hear from God through His word. We have been given everything we need for life and godliness here in the pages of Scripture. We have been given the living active, sufficient, inerrant Word of God for us, for our lives. And that is what we come to look at this morning. That is what we come this morning to spend time in together - is God's Word.

So, turn with me in the book of Philippians, to Philippians chapter 1. You might already be there from our Scripture reading this morning. And as Pastor Jeremy mentioned, we are going to spend time this morning in Philippians 1:12-20. And I'm just going to read that section again. We cannot have too much Scripture in our lives, right? Amen? So, let's look at verse 12 together as we walk through this excellent passage. Philippians chapter 1 beginning in verse 12.

12 Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, 13 so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, 14 and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. 15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ from envy and strife, but some also from good will; 16 the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; 17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, and that I will not be put to shame in anything, but with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

In our society, it seems they have done everything to remove true knowledge from our midst. They've tried to make truth relative, decisions subjective, and absolutes ambivalent. On the one hand, the centers for intellectual knowledge have found no end to learning and information, but

true knowledge, real knowledge is a rare commodity. For Paul, we're going to see in this text, it was real knowledge that fueled the fire of his joy. It was real knowledge that did not allow the wind and the rain of circumstances and the philosophies around him to snuff out the warmth of his joy that he had in Christ.

In fact, that is one of the purposes for Paul writing this letter to Philippi. It is so that they too would have joy in Christ no matter what circumstances they faced. He wanted them to experience the joy that he had, and that's why this epistle is known as the "epistle of joy". I like what Lenski says about Philippians, he says this, "Joy is the music that runs through this epistle, the sunshine that spreads over all of it." I love that. That's such a beautiful way of saying and describing the joy that bubbles from the pages in Philippians that we're going to look at today.

But friends, if you and I are going to have this kind of joy, there's requirements for us. In fact, in the verses just prior to this, the text that we're looking at today, if we look back at verse 9, Paul prays something very specific for these Philippian believers. He says this in verse 9 (and look back there with me), "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in..." what? "...in real knowledge and all discernment." Joy and knowledge are inseparably tied at the hip. Knowledge is the rocket fuel that propels joy. What is it that stabilized Paul and his joy here? Separated from these believers that he loved, these believers that he had some hand in bringing the gospel to initially, he's not able to facetime them or to call them or to Skype them. Instead, he's only able while under house arrest, to send them a letter from prison. He's chained to a Roman guard and he's limited. He can't go and see them as he would like. I don't think it's any coincidence here that Paul keys in on knowledge in this epistle of joy, in verses 12 through 20.

Real knowledge is what keeps us from the brink. Real knowledge is what controls our feelings. Real knowledge is what keeps the fear of the unknown at bay. Real knowledge is what brings us to a deeper understanding of Christ and therefore, a deeper love of Christ. Real knowledge is what brings us to the point of exhausting our own self-sufficiency. Real knowledge is the basis for all discernment. And if you're a MacArthur fan, "discernment" as well. There's discernment and then there's "discernment". It's real knowledge that informs and conforms Biblical joy in us, friends.

So, this morning, I want us to see three aspects of knowledge that will fuel Biblical joy. First, we're going to see "Knowledge of Gospel Progress," in verses 12 through 14. Then we're going to see "Knowledge of Gospel Preaching," in 15 through 18. And then we're going to conclude with "Knowledge of Gospel Provision," in 19 through 20. There're three aspects here that we can pull out that fueled Paul's joy, that stabilized his joy in Christ. And friends, you can have that same joy today. No matter what you are facing, no matter what the Lord brings in your life, you too can have this joy in Christ. That's encouragement, that's hope for us.

It's so encouraging to get reports of the gospel spreading. And that will bring us to our first point here: Knowledge of Gospel Progress. That's one of the aspects that I really enjoyed working at Grace Community Church, for a period of time. Is there is sort of a hub in our circles for ministry endeavors and missions' endeavors and the gospel spreading, and reports are coming back to Grace Community of what the Lord is doing through His servants around the globe. And

the church that I serve at now, our senior pastor just recently started walking through a series in Acts. And it's an encouraging reminder for us of how God works to bring about His gospel in the lives of those that He saves. It's the Holy Spirit that works. Right? And we see that throughout Acts.

Yet, what I see in this text this morning is that the Gospel did not spread through glamorous means. In fact, the gospel was spreading through a man who was where? He was in prison. He was under house arrest. And yet, that was not the stop of gospel progress for him. These believers in Philippi were sincerely concerned about Paul. In fact, he was their spiritual father in a sense, the one who had a very real hand in bringing the gospel to Philippi.

We could go back to Acts 16 and see how Paul was involved in the salvation of Lydia. And Paul was involved in the salvation of the Philippian jailer, who were both miraculously saved by God's power, and more than likely involved in this church that he's writing to. A church is started there, and Paul has to make an exit just as quickly as he came. He left. God had changed their lives through the ministry of a man who was faithful to bring them the gospel. And now, that man was in prison.

Recently, we have a missionary who we're connected with, and sort of get updates from, who's in Turkey. And he was recently imprisoned. And when we first got the news, that's a bit disconcerting, we're concern for him and his welfare. And I was trying to put myself in the shoes of these Philippians here and picture not only the concern that I had for that brother in Turkey, but the concern I would have if that brother had some serious involvement in starting our church. How much more concerned would I be for him? That's what these Philippian believers must have felt for Paul. They were genuinely concerned about how Paul was doing.

So, the Philippians were so concerned that they send Epaphroditus to Paul, both to bring a financial gift to him and to encourage his spirit. And I'm sure they must've given instructions to Epaphroditus, "Find out how he's doing. We want to know what's going on with Paul. Find out about his circumstances." And yet, as we read the book of Philippians and as we read the text that we're looking at this morning, there's something very striking about what Paul says about his circumstances.

What details do you see of his circumstances here in this text? What do you see of his circumstances in this text? You see that he says in verse 12 that, "My circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel." This is someone who was in house arrest, someone who had faced much for Christ, and what he says about his circumstances is that it's turned out for greater progress of the gospel. He doesn't go into details here. He doesn't go into the specifics. Instead, he says, "God is working through me, and that's enough. That's enough for me."

I'm sure if I were the Philippian believers and I had received this letter back from Paul, whoever the messenger was, I would have been looking for another page. "You're missing something here. We asked about how Paul was doing and you gave us back this wonderful letter. But retrace your steps. I'm sure you're going to find it. You dropped a page. Go back to Paul, let's get

a few more details here. When is he going to be released? Have the soldiers treated him fairly?" Yet, that's not what Paul focuses on in this text.

Paul isn't focused on any of those questions. In fact, Paul's joy is rooted in a knowledge that sees through and past his circumstances. It's not that his circumstances are unimportant or that our circumstances or your circumstances are unimportant - they are important. But there's something more important than your circumstances or my circumstances, friends. And that is Jesus Christ being made known to the nations.

Look again at verse 12, I love this verse. "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel." It's as if he's saying, "There's a lot I could tell you about what's going on here in my life, but here's what's important, friends. Here's the main thing - the gospel is spreading."

In fact, the Lord has a sense of humour with Paul, and I love seeing the Lord's sense of humour in our own lives. He pulls back the curtain at times and we say, "Lord, You do have a sense of humour." We see back in Romans chapter 1 that Paul, in fact, desired to go to Rome and bring the gospel to Rome. We see in chapter 1:9 of Romans,

For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you...So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Well, Paul, got his wish, didn't he? But it wasn't through an amazing missions' organization, it wasn't through a fancy pulpit. It was through imprisonment. It was through house arrest, being chained to a Roman guard. I don't think Paul could have dreamed that up, that this would be God's plan for him to bring the gospel to Rome. Would anyone have dreamed this up? If God sat me down and said, "Andrew, here's my plan to work through Paul that I'm thinking of planning before the foundations of the earth, to have him imprisoned and send him to Rome so that he might preach the gospel effectively to Rome." I would say, "Question. I don't really understand how that's the most effective way." But it was. It was effective for the gospel spreading as we see later in this text.

MacArthur says this about Paul being under house arrest, and I love what he says here. Paul has a captive audience. MacArthur says this, and I quote,

Paul was chained at night and day to a Roman soldier. He had no privacy when he ate, when he slept, when he wrote, when he prayed and when he preached, taught or visited with friends. Yet for a period of two years, this very lack of privacy made it impossible for the Roman soldiers guarding him to avoid hearing the gospel and witnessing Paul's remarkable Christ-likeness.

I love that. Roman soldiers weren't known as cuddly teddy bears. They weren't known as someone you would want to be chained to and share the gospel with, especially if you were chained to them. Maybe Satan was pleased that Paul was locked up, and that his gospel zeal

could be contained to a crusty Roman soldier. For Satan's plan of gospel compromise and gospel distraction, this had to be close to a 10.

But Paul says, "Rather than bringing about the retreat of gospel work, this served as advancement." The march forward, much like a hiker cutting through brush, the gospel was advancing. Or a mountaineer on a mountain cutting steps into the snow, the gospel was advancing. It breaks any chains, it crosses any obstacles, it destroys any boundary. What Paul says in Timothy, Second Timothy chapter 2:8 is so applicable to this situation. He says,

8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but (and I love the "buts" of Scripture, the turning points of Scripture) the word of God is not imprisoned. 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.

The Word of God is not imprisoned. Salvation is a work by God, and He uses broken vessels to bring the message of the gospel to those around us. God doesn't need our cleverness or our better ways. He needs His way and our humility and our faithfulness like Paul was faithful to bring the gospel.

One of the things that I really appreciate about what Paul says here, is he doesn't downplay his circumstances. He doesn't say, "Oh, my circumstances aren't that big of a deal. You know, this Roman soldier, he's not that bad of a guy. He smells okay. It's not that bad. My circumstances aren't too bad." No, he doesn't minimize, he doesn't downplay. Sometimes, that can be my automatic reaction. And we view it as spiritual to sort of downplay what we're experiencing, the pain of what we're experiencing, the difficulty of what we're experiencing. Paul doesn't make light of his circumstances. He faces the reality of the hardship chained to his arm and looks past that to the hand that bound to him.

Another thing we need to catch in verse 13, not only did his imprisonment turnout for the greater progress of the gospel, but you see in verse 13, "so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ". He's able to have joy here because he knew his imprisonment was for the cause of Christ. He didn't get into some brawl about something that didn't matter, and now he's facing the legitimate consequences of his actions, he's suffering for Christ here. And therefore, his conscience is clear, and he's able to stand firm and have joy. And that's not to say that God doesn't work in spite of us. He does. Praise God that he works in spite of our sinful choices at times. But Paul is able to have confidence here, and he had a clear conscience, and he could report that his chains were working out for the greater progress of the gospel. Because this persecution that he was facing was for the cause of Christ.

We need to make sure that our speech and our conduct and our attitudes are consistent with what Christ exuded when He was on this earth. We're not going to do that perfectly, but we need to have greater progress toward that end. I love the word that's used for "has become well known". Literally, Paul is saying that it has become visible or clear that his bonds are for Christ. Paul didn't just give the reason for the hope that was within him, he also provides a visible manifestation that shouted through his actions. That there's something different about this

prisoner. There's something different about this prisoner that the Roman soldier was chained to. What are you making visible or clear to the world around you? I was thinking about this for my own life and if I had a Roman soldier chained to my arm 24/7, what would that soldier see in my life? What would be visible or clear to him? If you had a friend in your home 24/7, what would be visible or clear? That's convicting for my heart. Would they see Christ as these soldiers saw in Paul? Would it be consistent?

He goes on in verse 13, "...my imprisonment and the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else." Paul doesn't just say that, "You know, a few of the guards I've had opportunities with," he says that they all know about Christ now. They all know about Christ. That's because his words matched his actions. His attitudes and his behaviours matched what he was saying about this Christ person who came and died for him and changed his life.

I love that he adds right at the end there in case he's leaving anyone out, "And everyone else." I think it's safe to say that Paul's boldness made him the topic of conversation to this praetorian guard. Political prisoners who were under house arrest would be in the control of the prefect and guarded personally by the soldiers of the praetorian guard. The soldiers would have experience with political prisoners. Paul would've stood out. That would've been something very clear, something visible in his life that's different.

From a gospel perspective, can we really say that it was a bad thing that Paul was imprisoned? Paul reserves judgment of his situation when confronted with the difficulty of imprisonment and instead, looks for God's hand which is always present in the believers' life, friends. Whatever it is that you have faced in the past, whatever it is that you will face in the future, whatever it is that you're facing right now, God's hand is in your life and He has a purpose. Paul's influence here wasn't just the amazing result that the gospel reached this praetorian guard, but it also extended to those within the church. I want you to catch this here, faithful witness for Christ will always have both an external and an internal influence in the church.

The progress of the gospel was realized in two specific ways. It went forth through Paul in the praetorian guard and to everyone else as we saw in verse 13. But Paul's boldness was such an encouragement to the brethren around him, that they had courage to just speak the Word of God without fear. As we see in verse 14 - look at 14 with me, "and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear."

The word for "trusting" here refers to being so convinced of something that you're going to put your confidence in it. I might put my confidence in a footbridge, but I'm going to look at it first and maybe stick my foot out there and kind of check it to see if it's stable. I've heard that you guys have a really good bungee jumping deal up at Whistler. I'd love to do that someday, but I'm probably going to read Yelp reviews before going out and trusting my life with this bungee cord, right? If they're getting one-star reviews, I'm probably not going, right? I was using a ladder over this summer to paint at my house, and it was a bit disconcerting because you've got the two pieces of the ladder going up, right? And one of the sides apparently had been run over, and so it kind of bent a little bit. And every time that you put your weight on the ladder, it would just lean

a little bit. It was disconcerting. I wasn't ready to put all my confidence in it. These believers were so convinced that they could trust the Lord. They were infused with confidence because of Paul's imprisonment. Paul's example to them was so convincing. What God was doing through Paul was so convincing that they said, "I will put my trust in that same Lord to be as bold as Paul is being in prison." This is counter to my human thinking, but it's consistent with God's thinking. The praetorian guard was influential. If Paul could be bold with them, the church could be bold in their realms and influence as well. Paul's courage gave them courage to speak the Word without fear. Faithful gospel witness in your life, friends, and in my life, radiates outward, not just to the people who we have contact with, that we share the gospel with, but to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ as it did for Paul.

Let's transition to our second aspect of knowledge that will fuel Biblical joy. And that is gospel preaching. Paul says that he is appointed for the defense of the gospel. We see back in verse 7, that the same word used in "the defense (or the *apologia*) and confirmation of the gospel." We know that word. That's where we get "apologetics" from. Paul is appointed for the *apologia* of the gospel, which of course, involves preaching and teaching and defending God's Word.

However, we get this really strange verse in verse 15. It's one of those moments where it's like, "Paul, did you forget to pick up the pen as you were writing here? This doesn't make sense to me." Why do we have verse 15 included in this mission's update letter from Paul? It says in verse 15, "Some to be sure are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from goodwill."

We understand that Paul had those in his life, who were opposed to his ministry. And that opposition didn't just originate from unbelievers. We see in his letter to the Corinthians, in Second Corinthians 10 he says, "For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.'" The personal attack, I understand against Paul. Because unfortunately, that's far too common in the church. But why would anyone, why would anyone share Christ out of motive, as we see in verse 17, to cause someone else distress? Why? It does not make sense to use the gospel to that end. We have an interesting dynamic here. He doesn't say that it's a different gospel like we see in Galatians chapter 1, a *heterose* gospel, a different gospel that's a non-gospel, a false gospel. He says that they were proclaiming Christ, the one true, unchanging gospel. They weren't the Judiaizers, they weren't trying to mix works with justification for salvation. Again, that is a different gospel. That's not what's going on here. These preachers were indeed preaching the one true gospel but from stained or impure motives. Somehow, they were either envious of Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles. They envied his influence in the church and so, they sought to preach his message in his place instead of alongside him in the common cause of Christ. Paul doesn't give us explicitly what was being said, what these preachers were doing.

Maybe these preachers claimed that the reasons for Paul's imprisonment were his own personal sins, much like Job's friends. Maybe some thought that this was God's judgment on Paul for being unfaithful to his duties. Maybe some assumed that he had compromised with Rome and that's why he was still alive and under house arrest, instead of a martyr. Regardless, Paul didn't concern himself with the impure motives. He focused on what was happening, and this is really incredible. He focused on what was spreading despite those who were trying to cause him

distress in his imprisonment. He wasn't consumed by the motives of those that proclaimed Christ.

He also makes it clear that there are some who proclaim Christ from good motives, from pure motives, goodwill, out of a love for Paul. Love for your neighbour and love for God is the only foundation of acceptable service. Those who proclaim the gospel out of a love for Paul knew that, as we see in verse 16, that he was appointed for the defense of the gospel. They knew the real reason that Paul was there, it wasn't because of personal sin, it wasn't because of God's judgment, it wasn't because he had compromised with Rome. It was because God was using him in those specific circumstances for His purposes, for Paul's good and for the good of the gospel going forth.

I wonder if some of these preachers who were preaching from selfish ambition made unfair assumptions about Paul, like the Pharisees did with the blind men in John 9. Where Jesus answered and said, "It was neither that this man sinned nor his parents, but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

The word that's used for "selfish ambition" didn't originally have bad connotations, but referred to those who would work for hire. As time went on, it grew to mean those who were simply looking out for themselves. Career professionals who ruthlessly tried to get to the top in their realm by any means needed. Someone who sought position through any moral expense. Those who loved Paul knew that he was appointed as this text says, for the defense of the gospel.

And I love the word "appointed", literally, it's that Paul was set for the defense of the gospel. God set him there, put him there, placed him there strategically and intentionally.

They were preaching Christ, which is the only gospel we have, the only good news that we have. Paul says in First Corinthians 1:23, "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness." The moment our declaration of Scripture or announcing of this message fails to include Christ, it is no longer the gospel. Paul did not concern himself with the motives behind the messengers, but concerned himself with the message, the content of the message. If Christ was put on display to a lost and dying world, if the true gospel of Christ was preached and announced, what did it matter that he was the target of distress, that he was the target of pot shots. What did it matter that he was under house arrest? What did it matter that he could be executed at any time? Christ was preached. That's the same sentiment that John the Baptist proclaimed. "He must increase, I must decrease." It's about Christ in our lives, friends. Is Christ increasing?

I love what Paul says here in verse 18. He says, "What then? What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed and in this, I rejoice." I read this and I say, "You're kidding me, Paul. You're kidding me. Let's have a little side conversation here. Is that what you really mean? Whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed?" If it was me, I would be saying, "I'm very thankful that Christ is being proclaimed through those that have pure motives. And for those who are not trying to cause me distress, I'm thankful for that Lord, but would you just bring fire from heaven against those people that are trying to cause me distress?" That's not what Paul says, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed. Is that your



outlook on life? Could you be the target of personal attack? Could you look through the pain of personal attack and see that Christ is on display and say in your heart and with your mouth, “I rejoice, yes, I will rejoice”?

“What then?” In our vernacular, we could say, “What does it matter?” Remember, joy always finds its roots that are deeper than the surface. They send a tap root down to the truth, to the water, to something that will not change, so that whatever you're facing in your circumstances, that tap root is drawing from the truth, drawing from the perspective that it's about Christ. It's about the gospel. If the circumstantial flowers of blessing are scorched and the roots of joy are found in the deep realities other than our own personal existence, we will have joy.

Earlier in the chapter, Paul found joy in the Philippian's participation in the gospel. We see that in verse 5. He found joy in the confidence that he had that God was going to sanctify them. We see that in verse 6. “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.” Verse 18, he finds joy in the preaching of Christ. The power of the message is not in the messenger, but in the message of Christ.

As I was thinking about these preachers who are trying to cause Paul distress, Jonah came to mind as a candidate here. His motives were not right. Were they? The first thing he did is run as far away as he could from being faithful to what God wanted him to do. And then when he obeyed, he went kicking and screaming, hoping that God would bring fire down and destroy this people. And yet, what God does is He brings about an amazing repentance, an amazing revival, and Jonah complains. It's not pure motives. But God works through that and God works in that.

The third aspect of knowledge that will fuel Biblical joy (and we'll cover this one briefly) is gospel provision. Paul says at the end of verse 18, “Yes, I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” Paul affirms his current outlook, “Yes, I will rejoice.” “Paul, do you see your circumstances? Do you see what's going on around you? You rejoice?” Yes, he will rejoice, and we can rejoice. He knew that this would turn out for his deliverance. One day, Paul would be delivered from prison and delivered from the accusations and attempts of others around him to cause him distress and affliction.

Our understanding of what Paul means here, that he would be delivered, is qualified by verse 20. He says, “Whether by life or by death.” That's a good perspective, isn't it? All of this is temporary, friends. We are passing through. This is a vapor of life. What's done for Christ will last, and Paul gets it. Paul says, “I'm going to be delivered. Whether this prison cell, this house arrest, is it for me, or I am delivered to further ministry - I know where I'm going. I've got my sights fixed on the eternal prize.”

I also really love Paul's theology here. He gets God's sovereign plan. He gets the execution of God's decree that is fixed in his mind. But he says that he would be delivered through what? “...My deliverance (in verse 19) ...through your prayers.” We get a glimpse into the importance of prayer, not just in these opening verses in chapter 1, if we could go back and read. But the importance of prayer here. Somehow, the outcome of Paul's imprisonment involve these prayers that the Philippians had. Tell me that prayer is not active. Tell me that prayer does not work.

That was not Paul's theology. Paul understood the sovereignty of God and he also understood our responsibility and our involvement and our active nature of prayer and the necessity for that. I love what he says in Second Corinthians. He says, "You also joining and helping us through your prayers." Prayer accomplishes much, friends. Do we believe that? Paul did. This wasn't just an encouragement to Paul's ministry that they were praying. It was imperative for the effectiveness of Paul's ministry.

Yet, it wasn't just their prayers that empowered Paul, it was also the ministry of the Holy Spirit. These two forces, both prayer and the Holy Spirit are two pieces in the Christian life that achieve spiritual effectiveness, and yet, oftentimes for my own life, it's the two that are most ignored. This was not the case for Paul. It says at the end of verse 19, "...and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." This word for "provision" is the same word that's used of a ligament that serves to support. I love that picture - the support of the Holy Spirit, the provision of the Holy Spirit.

Paul goes on to say that he had a firm confidence, an earnest expectation. That "earnest expectation" could be translated literally as "stretching of the neck". It's like he's straining looking forward. Paul might be put to shame in the Roman court before the eyes of those who wanted to cause him harm, to cause him distress, but he would never, he would never be put to shame in the High Court of Heaven. God gave him boldness. This gave him boldness. He says in verse 20 "...that with all boldness, Christ will even now as always be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death." The boldness that Paul had was not that his ministry would be spread, not that his fame would be spread, but that Christ would be exalted in his body. His body was a temple of the Holy Spirit.

I want you to catch a nuance here in the word that's used in the original. The word that's used for "be exalted", could be translated "to cause to be large." I love that. He's setting his heart and his mind to cause Christ to be held in greater esteem and praise through his actions. That's what it means to have Christ be exalted in our lives. This *megaluno*, *mega*, big - to make big in his life. Is Christ being made large in your life, friends? Is Christ being made large or is Andrew and my circumstances being made large? Out of the overflow of all of this, we get the amazing verse, one of the most famous verses in Philippians for sure is verse 21. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Those words are on the heels of the context of everything that we have just walked through. That's what it means for him to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

So, as we close, friends, I want to back up for a moment and give us some perspective for whatever and wherever the Lord has placed you. Wherever the Lord has set you strategically in your life. I don't know what you face daily. I don't know the pressures at home. I don't know the relational hurt you've experienced. I don't know the financial difficulties or the employment difficulties, but what I do know is that Paul faced many of those things, and he didn't minimize the pain of what he was experiencing, but he didn't focus on it either. He focused on true knowledge. He focused on the fact, the reality that the gospel was going forth. There was gospel progress, there was gospel preaching and there was gospel provision.

As I was reading different commentators. I came across the familiar story of John Bunyan, illustrating all of this in summary. And we've seen this in Paul's life in these verses. But let me just close with reading a summary of John Bunyan's preaching. I quote.

John Bunyan's preaching was so popular and powerful and so unacceptable to leaders in the 17th Century Church of England that he was jailed in order to silence him. Refusing to be silent, he began to preach in the jail courtyard. He not only had a large audience of prisoners, but also hundreds of the citizens of Bedford and the surrounding areas would come to the prison daily and stand outside to hear him expound the Scripture. He was silenced verbally by being placed deep inside the jail and forbidden to preach at all. Yet in that silence, he spoke loudest of all and to more people than he could have imagined.

It was during that time that he wrote the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the great Christian classic that has ministered of the gospel to tens of millions throughout the world. For several centuries, it was the most widely read and translated book in the world after the Bible. Bunyan's opponents were able to stop his preaching for a few years, but they were not able to stop his ministry. Instead, they provided opportunity for it to extend from deep within a jail in the small town of Bedford to the ends of the earth.

God is using you. God is using each of you. Are you faithful with where God has placed you? He has His purposes. We don't always get to see those purposes, but are you being faithful? The gospel will go forth. Through the prayers of the saints that will support you, the provision of the Spirit, the gospel will progress. Let's pray.

Father, I am thankful for the example we have in Your servant, Paul. But I'm also convicted Father, convicted by the reality that I can so easily focus on my own circumstances that I miss what You're accomplishing through them. Give us strength, Father. Give us Your grace. Give us Your mercy, I pray, that we might honour You with our lives. That Grace Fellowship Chilliwack might be a beacon of light to a dying world through this strategic place that You have set them both as individuals and as a church.

Thank you for the way that You work in our lives, Father. Thank you for letting us be a part, a small part, but an impacting part of Your kingdom. Give us a greater sense of Your love. For the lost, give us a greater sense of Your love for one another that we might honour You, that we might make You big, we might make You great in our lives. We pray all of this in Your Son's name, amen.