

What a great promise we saw in the opening of this letter. The One who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it. (1:6) Our God is a faithful God! Amen? I cling to this promise. The more you grow the more you see how much you need to grow, but this promise keeps us from being discouraged. God will conform us to the image of His Son. (Romans 8:29) That's worthy of a Hallelujah!

Then Paul told them how he prayed. He prayed that their love would increase with knowledge and discernment so that they would be blameless and filled with the fruit of righteousness, bringing glory to God. (1:9-11) That's the plan. You don't need another one. We don't need anyone's how to lesson, or godliness in five easy steps. It's about being in Christ and living out the Great Command. (Mark 12:31-32) Do that and the Great Commission will happen naturally. Remain in Christ and you will bear fruit. (John 15:5) Grow in love and you'll walk in God's ways, filled with knowledge and discernment.

In the letter to the Colossians, we spoke of how Paul never really wrote about his situation. This letter to the Philippians is written a little later. He is definitely in Rome. (Though some believe Ephesus) The Book of Acts closes with a note of how Paul was imprisoned in his own hired house and freely proclaimed the gospel to all who came to see him. (Acts 28:30-31) Now he mentions his imprisonment, but only as it has to do with a praise report. Paul is demonstrating what he will teach later in the letter. (4:8) We are to keep our minds focused on what is praise worthy.

¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, Philippians 1:12 (ESV) Paul is kingdom minded. It doesn't really matter what happens to him as long as the kingdom of God advances. He sees the good that God is bringing out of his difficulty.

You may have a tough go of things right now, but you are free. You can come and go. You aren't chained to anyone 24/7. If Paul can see the good that God is doing in that situation and only speak praise, we can, by the grace of God, follow his example. He is turning their concern for him to praise for what God is doing, because God is always on the throne of heaven accomplishing His purposes. (Daniel 4:35)

Paul realized his imprisonment served to advance the gospel. He used a military term, "advance", (*prokope*) which means the progress of an army as it takes territory. The Good News is claiming more hearts for the kingdom of God because of Paul's imprisonment.

Commented [Paul1]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)
⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Commented [Paul2]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)
²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Commented [Paul3]: Philippians 1:9-11 (ESV)
⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,
¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,
¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Commented [Paul4]: Mark 12:30-31 (ESV)
³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.
³¹ The second is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
There is no other commandment greater than these."

Commented [Paul5]: John 15:5 (ESV)
⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Commented [Paul6]: Acts 28:30-31 (ESV)
³⁰ He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,
³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Commented [Paul7]: Philippians 4:8 (ESV)
⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Commented [Paul8]: Daniel 4:35 (ESV)
³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

We don't enjoy the difficulties of life, but often they accomplish something that would never have been accomplished otherwise. David prayed, "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn your statutes.*" (Psalm 119:71) We know the end of Job, a man that suffered more than any of us ever will. He said, "I have heard of you with the ear, but now my eyes have seen you!" (Job 42:5) He ended up more blessed spiritually than he ever would have if he had not suffered. He even ended up more blessed physically, though that is not always the case. (James 5:11) Read of the saints at the end of Hebrews 11 or any issue of Voice of the Martyrs. (persecution.com)

Commented [Paul9]: Psalm 119:71 (ESV)

⁷¹ It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

Commented [Paul10]: Job 42:5 (ESV)

⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;

Commented [Paul11]: James 5:11 (ESV)

¹¹ Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

I've never had anyone dispute the fact that we grow more spiritually when we are going through difficulty than at any other time. None of us would choose it. Even Jesus preferred not to go to the cross. (Mark 14:36) That's natural. But God cares more about our eternal good than our temporal happiness. He took Jesus to the cross because He loves us. He takes us through trials because He loves us. Not all our trials are God's perfect (intended) will, but He does permit and use each trial if we will let Him. That's a big IF. Paul was letting God use his situation to advance the kingdom.

Commented [Paul12]: Mark 14:36 (ESV)

³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Think about it. He was there because he was obedient to the Jerusalem leaders. If he hadn't gone to the Temple to help those brothers with their vows, he would never have been arrested. (Acts 21:23-24) I won't speculate whether or not he was in God's perfect will, but we can see that he was trying to do what was right, trying to bring unity, trying to submit to authority, and now he is suffering for it.

Commented [Paul13]: Acts 21:23-24 (ESV)

²³ Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow;

²⁴ take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law.

Some of our trials are self-induced. Others are caused by sins of others. Nevertheless, God will use each and every one if we will allow Him to do so. What is the alternative? You can pout and ignore God and have a pity party. You can wallow in your misery and the injustice of this world, but what good does that do? Paul could have said, "God, it's just not fair. I keep denying myself and serving You, and You let this happen! Isn't the thorn in my side enough?" But he didn't give in to that attitude. Instead, he looked for what God was doing. He saw the gospel marching forward like an army unit taking new territory.

He probably had no idea that we'd be reading this letter 2000 years later and be encouraged by his example. Sometimes you'll never see what God is ultimately doing, but by faith we believe that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28) Decide in advance that you will look for the good in the next trial. That is God's will! Don't waiver! (4:1)

Commented [Paul14]: Romans 8:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Commented [Paul15]: Philippians 4:1 (ESV)

¹ Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. Philippians 1:13 (ESV) The praetorium were the personal guards of the emperor. There were 12 units of 1000 soldiers each. They were

either from Rome or one of the most loyal of Roman cities. They are the ones that really wielded the power. It seems that the message of Paul's faith in Jesus had become known to them and the rest of the elites of Rome. What a strange but effective way for the gospel to reach these people who never would have otherwise heard. From slaves to the elite leadership of Rome, the gospel had advanced to every strata of society and continues to do so in the world to this day. (1Timothy 2:4)

Commented [Paul16]: 1 Timothy 2:4 (ESV)

⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I had someone protest that Jesus was wrong when He said the kingdom would come during the life of some of those who heard Him. I asked, "What do you call a billion people who pledge their total devotion to one King?" The Kingdom came at Pentecost when the Spirit of God took up residence in the hearts of the Jews gathered for that feast. (Acts 2:30-32) It is the Spirit that enables us to serve our King. There is definitely more to come, but to say that the advancing of the gospel to every corner of the planet is not the kingdom is to deny the obvious reality.

Commented [Paul17]: Acts 2:30-32 (ESV)

³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

The King is ruling in my heart! Is He ruling in yours? Then you are a part of the kingdom. The kingdom was advancing into the very stronghold of power in Rome. Where the hordes of the Goths would fear to tread for a few more centuries, the gospel came in boldly and began invading heart after heart. God's ways are definitely higher than the ways of man. (Isaiah 55:9)

Commented [Paul18]: Isaiah 55:9 (ESV)

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Paul saw another positive outcome from his hardship. ¹⁴ *And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* Philippians 1:14 (ESV) Apparently some people were afraid that if they spoke up about their commitment to Jesus and the gospel, they would end up imprisoned. But now that they see Paul's example of being used in prison to spread the gospel, and his willingness to trust God for the outcome, they have lost their fear and proclaim the truth of the gospel with boldness.

If someone will lead the way, others will follow. I don't mean that they will follow the pattern. What pattern is there? Go get arrested in the Temple in Jerusalem? No! It is simply having the boldness to bring Jesus into the conversation, to answer honestly about why we are different. It is to proclaim the word of Christ when God gives us the opportunity without fear or hesitation. (1Peter 3:15)

Commented [Paul19]: 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

There are places right now, where people are being imprisoned for Christ. Those that fellowship with them are emboldened to share Christ, and do not become more fearful. It's unexplainable. (Acts 4:31) Algeria, Iran, Morocco, and China are all experiencing increased persecution but also an increase in boldness. We need to remember them in our prayers, not that God would spare them from the persecution, but that God would use it to advance the kingdom like an army marching into the enemy's territory!

Commented [Paul20]: Acts 4:31 (ESV)

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

You would think that if you saw someone being beaten for their faith it would cause us to become timid. I've heard so many testimonies that the opposite is true. It gives believers courage to not fear and to lay down our sense of security and safety and trust the Lord. (Luke 12:4) I'm not saying that we invite persecution or do something that will intentionally draw persecution upon believers, but rather to be ready to see where there are receptive hearts and being willing to sacrifice all to share the truth and hope that we have in Jesus.

Commented [Paul21]: Luke 12:4 (ESV)

⁴"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. Philippians 1:15 (ESV) Does Paul mean that even back then churches were competing with one another? We know from the letter to the Romans that there were a number of house churches in Rome. Or it may have been synagogues that felt they were in competition with the churches and so preached Christ in the streets to get Paul in more trouble.

Today a church is often in competition with the church down the street. Members bounce back and forth for one reason or another. I've been told by some pastors that there are towns where pastors will intentionally do big events on the same day as another church's event so as to try to keep their own or draw others away. What an unbiblical way to see the church! (Psalm 133:1)

Commented [Paul22]: Psalm 133:1 (ESV)

¹ Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

We are in a battle together. As long as the other church is proclaiming the gospel, the essentials of the Word, I want to pray for their success. We fight for the same cause. We may be in different parts of the battle formation, but we are on the same side. If we have a kingdom mindset, like Paul does in this letter, we just want to see the kingdom go forward. We just want to see more people liberated from darkness and have their eyes opened. No two people will agree on every doctrine. But we can be united around the fundamentals of the gospel. That is the only reason for our unity. That should cause us to encourage and hope the best for one another. (John 17:20-21)

Commented [Paul23]: John 17:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Paul didn't even care that their motivations were envy and rivalry. He just wanted the truth of Jesus' death for sinners to be proclaimed in the streets. He didn't care if it meant more trouble for him. People were hearing the good news. Oh that we might catch that same spirit of exalting Jesus first and foremost!

¹⁶ The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

¹⁷ The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. Philippians 1:16-17 (ESV) The motivations were very different, but that didn't matter. Rivalry is all about self-advancement. The Greek word originally meant someone who did something for financial gain. Later it came to be applied to politicians. You can understand why. Perhaps these that were proclaiming Christ out of rivalry were

trying to win over some of those who followed Paul's teaching. Their main motivation was to make imprisonment harder for Paul. It's hard to believe people can be so vindictive, but we see it all the time. God will deal with those who slander God's servants. We don't need to seek our own vengeance. God repays. (Romans 12:19)

¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, Philippians 1:18 (ESV) "There is a lesson for us here. Paul knew nothing of personal jealousy or of personal resentment. So long as Jesus Christ was preached, he did not care who received the credit and the prestige. He did not care what other preachers said about him, or how unfriendly they were to him, or how contemptuous they were of him, or how they tried to steal his disciples. **All that mattered to Paul was that Christ was preached.** (1Corinthians 2:2)

"All too often we resent it when someone else gains a prominence or honor. All too often we regard a man as an enemy because he has expressed some criticism of us or of our methods. All too often we think a man can do no good because he does not do things in our way. All too often the intellectuals have no truck with the evangelicals, and the evangelicals impugn the faith of the intellectuals. All too often those who believe in the evangelism of education have no use for the evangelism of decision, and those who practice the evangelism of decision have no use for those who feel that some other approach will have more lasting effects. Paul is the great example. He lifted the matter beyond all personalities; all that mattered was that Christ was preached." Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT – Philippians 1).

Is that all that matters to you? I must admit, I often feel the sting of criticism and have to make a great effort to keep from taking words in a personal way. Time and time again I have to remind myself that I have forgiven and that all that matters is that Christ is proclaimed. Proclaim Jesus with your witnessing program or proclaim Him with your life. Just proclaim Him. We must leave others to answer to their Master and go on about the Lord's business. (Romans 14:4)

Rejoice, the kingdom is claiming new territory! Let us follow the example of the Apostle and seek out what God is accomplishing in our difficulties and give Him the praise He deserves! After all, Paul was following the example of Jesus, who ²³ *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* 1 Peter 2:23 (ESV) Remember, that is the work God is completing in us, to conform us to the image of His Son. It's all about Him! Let us boldly declare Him with our life and our words. May the Lord grant us success to see the gospel advance in Sedona and around the world, whether by persecution or divine favor. Will you say amen?

Commented [Paul24]: Romans 12:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

Commented [Paul25]: 1 Corinthians 2:2 (ESV)

² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Commented [Paul26]: Romans 14:4 (ESV)

⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Questions

- 1 Review the key points from the previous week.
- 2 What does the word "advance" mean?
- 3 What condition must be met to learn from a trial?
- 4 What was the immediate fruit of Paul's imprisonment?
- 5 What was the secondary fruit?
- 6 What is the result of seeing Christians suffer?
- 7 Why is it unbiblical when churches compete?
- 8 What was Paul's attitude toward those trying to cause trouble for him?
- 9 What did Barclay see as the lesson?