"The Gospel Can’t be Stopped"

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18

10-30-2024

Background: Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Acts 28: A soldier guarded Paul (v.16), in chains (v.20), in his own hired house (v.30).

- **The Gospel Can’t be Stopped**!

I. <u>CHAINS</u> WILL NOT STOP THE GOSPEL OF GOD FROM ADVANCING (v.12-14)

A. PAUL'S CHAINS GAVE HIM <u>CONTACT</u> WITH THE LOST (v.12-13)

B. PAUL'S CHAINS GAVE <u>COURAGE</u> TO THE SAVED (v.14)

II. <u>CONTENTION</u> WILL NOT STOP THE GOSPEL OF GOD FROM ADVANCING (v.15-18)

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Intro: A Christian leader once took a Russian friend to see a world series baseball game. At the end of the game the Russian was asked what he thought of the sports event. He answered that never before had he seen such first-class dedication to an unimportant second-class cause.

Paul is an example of one who had a first-class dedication to a first-class cause - God's work! He loved it. He loved God's work because He loved the God of the work.
Ill. of pastor E.R. Jordan and his consuming love for the ministry.

In writing to the Philippians, Paul reveals his love for God's People (1:3-11), for God's work (1:12-18), and for God's Son (1:19-26).

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I. CHAINS WILL NOT STOP THE GOSPEL OF GOD FROM ADVANCING
(v.12-14)

Epaphroditus no doubt had told Paul that the Church at Philippi was worried about his imprisonment and that they were afraid that it might have hindered his missionary work. Paul now writes and assures them that just the opposite was the

case!

Remember: God's ways are not always our ways!

A. PAUL'S CHAINS GAVE HIM <u>CONTACT</u> WITH THE LOST (v.12-13)

More than anything else, Paul's desire was to preach the Gospel in Rome. The key city of the day. He could reach millions. Yet he was in chains. He wanted to go as a preacher but instead went as a prisoner. However he gives no sob story.

When it seems like things are not going the way they should stick to it! God may be doing something great, but you don't see it yet!

Paul displays a selfless attitude; He does not pity himself, rather is positive because he sees God's working through his life even in difficult circumstances. His main concern was the gospel and its advance.

"furtherance" = lit."to cut before", or "to cut down in advance" Used of an army of pioneer wood cutters which goes on ahead an army, cutting a road through the impenetrable forest, thus making possible the army to advance into regions where otherwise it could not have gone.

God may desire to put you in a situation that (to the flesh) is not real appealing.

The gospel is <u>on the march</u> in hearts & hands & on the lips of believers. All because of a man who capitalized upon his bad circumstances. He make the most of his imprisonment. He took advantage of the life, breath and health God had given him. <u>"the prison became his pulpit</u>"

Are you really willing to go anywhere?

The ministry is not “easy street”

Do you feel that it is too difficult to share your faith in your circumstances? Some blame family or friends. Some say "look at my boss!" "I can't live for Christ in this situation"

Paul didn't let circumstances cripple him. He didn't let opposition destroy his mission. Even though whenever he ate, wrote, talked or slept a rugged Roman soldier remained hand-cuffed to him.

As Paul made tents, he no doubt would have used this opportunity to speak of the Mansions Christ was preparing. As he met students, he may have talked about the master teacher. As he was chained to a soldier of Nero he no doubt spoke of himself as a solder for the king of kings. He sought an opportunity to witness at every opportunity.

ill. of a lady I know who while in a hospital bed led several patients & nurses to Christ.

v.13 - "bonds" = chains. Paul said elsewhere "I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of god is not bound" (2 Tim. 2:9)

Luke 21:12-13
But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute *you*, delivering *you* up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

"palace" - Roman Praetorium guard which had about 9 - 10 thousand imperial guards. Paul lived for 2 years, 24 hours a day with a guard chained to his wrist. What a captive audience! The shifts would change every 6 hours. So Paul witnessed to 4 men each day. Imagine yourself as one of those soldiers chained to a man who prayed "without ceasing" As different soldiers would take their turn guarding Paul they would 1) be forced t hear the conversations he had with his visitors, 2) they would be witnessed to, 3) They would hear the apostle pray, and 4)

listen as he dictated the epistles he wrote.

So many Romans were being saved that Paul concludes this letter to the Philippians by saying: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household" (Phil. 4:22).

Sometimes God has to put "chains" on his people to get them to accomplish a "pioneer advance" (a "furtherance" of the gospel) that could never have happened any other way.

God can use your inadequacies.

Ex. the "chains of blindness" of Fanny Crosby
Ex. Bob McConaghy – Paralyzed, yet very useful in working for the Lord in Graphic design.

Paul's chains gave him contact with the lost!

We often wonder: "Why these trials?" Why these difficulties?

> Many people have heard the story of Cory ten Boom, a Holocaust survivor, who in her book The Hiding Place relates an incident which taught her this principle. She and her sister, Betsy, had just been transferred to the worst German prison camp they had seen yet, Ravensbruck. Upon entering the barracks, they found them extremely overcrowded and flea-infested. Their Bible reading that morning had reminded them to rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in all circumstances. Betsy told Corrie to stop and thank the Lord for every detail of their new living quarters. Corrie at first flatly refused to give thanks for the fleas, but Betsy persisted. She finally succumbed. During the months spent at that camp, they were surprised to find how openly they could hold Bible study and prayer meetings without the brutal interference of the guards that the other women's barracks experienced. It was several months later when they learned that the guards would not enter the barracks because of the fleas.

B. PAUL'S CHAINS GAVE <u>COURAGE</u> TO THE SAVED (v.14)

How did Paul's chains give courage to others? One reason is this: The fact that Satan opposes the Gospel confirms its truth and trustworthiness all the more! People do not spend time attacking that which is nothing or non-existent (ex. Bill Murray's reaction to his mother's attack on Christianity)

Paul's fearlessness in witnessing rubbed off on others. When they saw how mightily Paul was being used by God though in chains they gained courage.

* Our attitude will rub off on others.

Paul's testimony which shined like a bright torch no doubt thawed out the timid saints, who were frozen with fear, so that they would gain courage to preach!

Ill. The boldness of George Dygert in 1984.

. David`s victory over Goliath gave Israel courage.
Ill. Jonathan's courage over the Philistines sparked Israel's courage (I Sam.14:6-23).

Appl. A student who decides to stand up for Christ against peer pressure will encourage others to follow suit.

Someone is looking up to you!

Many believers are spiritually asleep; The Devil has been beating down God's people long enough! It time for some of you (and I desire all of you) to stand up and love God's work and courageously witness for Christ. Such courage will rub off.

II. <u>CONTENTION</u> WILL NOT STOP THE GOSPEL OF GOD FROM ADVANCING (v.15-18)

v.15 - "envy" = "the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others." (Vines expos. Dict.)

Envy is the sinful desire to see the downfall of others so as to lift up yourself. "envy" = Cp. Mt.27:18
Envy is called a "work of the flesh" (Gal 5:21)
Envy is a characteristic of the old life before salv. Tit.3:3 = We were "...spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."

"Strife" - opposition caused because of enmity.
(envy & strife go together just like love & unity go together) "Let nothing be done through strife..."(2:3)

Some who preached out of envy & strife <u>may</u> have been: 1) "Judaizers" - Jews who used Christianity to gain adherents to the law of judaism; or 2) other <u>cultic</u> groups - who transform themselves into the Apostles of Christ. (II Cor.11:13-15). But I believe this is a reference to immature petty believers (maybe non-believers) who

wanted the preeminence! Note: He call them "brethren" (v.14), and they were not preaching a false gospel. (that would have brought no joy to Paul)

v.16 - "contention" = one who works for self advancement; One who canvasses for office to get people to support him.

We are to never proclaim Christ out of impure (selfish) motives. Don't do it for what you can get out of it.

What are your motives for going into the ministry?

These opponents would not ask: "have you trusted Christ?" rather "whose side are you on - ours or Paul's?" Such religious politics happens today. Ex. the professional jealousy even in Fundamentalism today.

"add affliction to my bonds" = "to make my chains dig into me"

They thought they could make jealousy arise in Paul's heart and thus increase his suffering.

appl. When another person gets the spotlight, does that irritate your pride? When they receive recognition, gain promotion etc. are you upset?

Ill. Saul's jealousy over David.

We are in this battle together! There is no room for envying! Praise God for their talent, ability etc.

v.17 - Love is the source from which our message is to flow.

We are to recognize God's distinctive calling on the lives of those who serve him, not be jealous of it. (Paul was appointed to "defend" the Gospel)

Ill. John Wesley & George Whitfield - 2 great English evangelists - disagreed on some doctrinal matters. Someone asked Wesley if he expected to see Whitfield in Heaven. Wesley replied: "No I do Not" They then asked: "Don's you think that Whitfield is a saved man?" "Of course he is a saved man! Wesley said. But I do not expect to see him in heaven because he will be so close to the throne of God and I so far away that I will not be able to see him!" Though they differed, Wesley had no envy in his heart nor did he oppose his ministry.

v.18 - "what then" = idea of "what do I feel about this?"..."well I will tell you"

Paul says I will not concern myself with those who are trying to cause pain in my life by trying to outdo me. I will rejoice because the Gospel will be effective (and save souls) even if preached out of wrong motives.

Say "Hallelujah!" every time the Gospel goes forth & people get saved (even though you did not lead them to Christ.)

Conclusion:

Paul tackled life with cheer & optimism; He knew that the preaching of Christ was the only antidote for the world's ills. So long as Christ was preached Paul did not care who received the credit. He did not care what he had to go through and he did not care what other preachers said about him.

Will you remain faithful to God's work no matter how others react? You will not if you do not have a consuming love for it.

If you love God's work 1) Chains will not stop the Gospel of God from advancing, and 2) Contention will not stop the man of God from rejoicing!