

Philippians Ch 1 Vs 9-18

Pioneering the Gospel

Now last week we focused on the “defense and confirmation of the gospel” but you recall that I spoke to you of the fact that true fellowship of koinonia; according to this passage here in the 1st 11 vs, consist of at least 3 major characteristics. Paul speaks of 3 things going on in his life which constituted his fellowship with them, #1 the fact that he had them in his mind, #2 they were in his heart, and #3 they were in his prayers. and Because we were sort of wrapping things up last week when we got to the 3rd aspect of prayer I told you that this week we would look just a little more in depth at vs 9-11 before we moved on, so lets read these 3 vs and dig around in them just a little bit more before we move on this morning.

Vs9-11

Paul says, “*and this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more*”, and you recall that I last week I said to you that in order for love to abound more it has to be abounding in the 1st place. So it’s not that there’s not love in this church or that they’re in need of correction concerning their position of it, Paul is simply saying, I pray that what you’re already doing just grows and grows; that your love would excel and increase. You know, praying for one another while we’re doing good, might just keep us from doing bad. Don’t wait for some one to blow life before they have the privilege of making it on your prayer list. I’m sure you’ve heard the old adage that, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” The point being that if you can do a little something in advance to prohibit something detrimental from happening later, then wisdom dictates that that’s what we should do. Well in keeping with that context there’s a little something that we can do for one another that has the propensity to prohibit spiritually detrimental things from coming into fruition in our lives. It’s called praying for one another, if God’s called you to be a part of this body then I encourage you to take that calling seriously by lifting this body up in your prayers, that God might have His perfect way in us both as individuals and as a corporate gathering.

But here Paul says, I’m praying for you and he makes 3 basic requests for them in vs 9-10 and then gives us insight as to the fruit or result of these things taking place in our lives in vs 11. What are the requests? The 1st 1 we just mentioned in part, that being “*that your love may abound still more and more*” but not blindly, how does he desire their love to abound? “*In knowledge and all discernment,*” in knowledge both about the Lord and how to relate to the Lord and to one another, that they just wouldn’t be blindly open to, and accepting to anything in the name of love. But rather that wisdom would be used in love and again the wisdom that is from above is 1st pure, *then* peaceable, but before peace comes what? Purity, now don’t misunderstand me, I’m not speaking about being hostile toward anyone or any group of people.

I'm simply saying that we can't compromise the truth of the word of God for the sake of "peace"; do we love the people who are caught up in sin and even in rebellion against God and the things of God? Absolutely God loves them and so are we to, but that doesn't mean that you approve of sin in people's lives that's separating them from God and destroying their lives and the lives of people around them. Love is to abound in *knowledge* and *all discernment* and notice that little word all there.

Not some discernment here and there when it's not a situation whereby you'll be challenged to step out of your comfort zone, but in *all* discernment. You might summarize this by saying that Paul is praying for them that they might continue to mature, and the heart and the mind are to be working together so that we have discerning love and loving discernment. The 2nd petition is "*that you may approve the things that are excellent.*" It's simply a progressive outcome of the 1st petition, if their love is increasing in knowledge and discernment, they will be able to "approve" or that word "approve" simply means to determine, those things that are excellent, or of godly value to their lives. So that they might live after those things and make application of those things to their lives, again as the bible says we're to abhor what is evil and cling to what is good, and finally, "*that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.*"

Now, that word "sincere" comes from a combination of 2 Latin words "sin" meaning "with out" and "cerey" meaning "wax". and So when Paul says I want you to be sincere he's saying that you would be with out wax and it carries with it the idea of being proved by being tested by the sunlight. You see in his day in Rome, as you may know it would seem as though anybody who was anyone was a sculptor, and so today we have all these ancient artifacts of these sculptures of various marble statues of people or busts or whatever. and It was very common in those days to work in marble, but the problem with having so many people in this line of work is that it wasn't always possible to know who were the legitimate business professionals who dealt in integrity vs those who didn't care how they made a buck as long as they were making it. and So maybe they were working on some of the finishing details of the face and they accidentally pop off the eyebrow or the nose or something, well what they would do is they would take some of the grounds of marble dust and mix it with wax so that it's tonal quality matched exactly with the statue they were working on.

Then they would reshape whatever they were working on and it would dry and harden on the statue and to the naked eye you couldn't tell the difference. and So you would but the thing, be all proud of your bargain until you got it home and set it out on the lawn, or maybe an open foyer in your home where the sun was shining through. and When it was "tested by sunlight" when the sun would shine on it, it wouldn't take too long for you to realize that it's eyebrow or nose or whatever was running down its face. Now before it was tested it seemed so genuine but in the end it was nothing more than wax, it wasn't "sincere" with out wax.

So Paul is saying here that I want your love to be with out wax, I don't want there to be anything phony about it, it shouldn't be lacking in authenticity. But rather it should be genuine and pure through and through, in 2 Cor ch 6, Paul is speaking out about how they commend themselves to God and in vs 6 he says, "*by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, and by sincere love.*" In 1 Tim 1:5 we read, "*Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.*" 1 Peter 1:22 says, "*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.*"

So the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul is here in Phil exhorting us that our love should abound more and more in knowledge and all discernment, so that we might be able to recognize those things that are of godly value to add to our lives and ungodly value to subtract from our lives. and That our love and interaction with one another might be genuine or pure and with out offense until the day that Christ takes us out of here, now again these words "with out offense" I want to remind you of the fact that it's not speaking of being non-offensive when it comes to the truth of the Gospel, because the fact is that the gospel is offensive. That's why Paul referred to the "offense of the cross", because the cross takes the combined best efforts of man through out all time and all the ages and puts them in their proper perspective and in their proper place. Which is right there along with the most vile, despised and abominable thing that man has ever done; upon the cross. Now to the religious man that's offensive, and to those that are perishing that's offensive, the bible says that the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. Think about that for a minute, does the message cross seem ridiculous to you, or some type of absurdity, then your perishing in your sins and you need to repent and get right with God. Because to us who are being saved, it's the power of God, that's what the bible teaches, it's where we place our hope.

To us who are being saved the message of the cross is far from foolishness but rather the ultimate act and demonstration of love from a God who would go to the furthest extent possible to provide a means of escape for mankind from the penalty of their sin. and So when Paul says here that you would be with out offense understand that he's not talking about, if you're truly acting in love you're not going to be honest with people or say or do anything that's going to be offensive to them. But rather he's speaking of doing things that will cause others to stumble, using your liberty in Christ as a cloak or covering for vice to do things, which stumble other people. He says don't be doing that, he's speaking about being with out fault when it comes to our relationships, not to be doing things that we know will trip up our brothers or sisters, that's not genuine love. Later on in ch 2:14-15 he'll kind of expound a little further on this when he says, "*Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.*" and Then in vs 11 the subsequent results of these thing happening in our lives (read).

Vs12

Now remember he's writing to them from prison, he wanted to go to Rome as a preacher, but instead he went there as a prisoner. and Believe me when I tell you he could have written a long letter that would've detailed that experience alone, about what it was that had happened to him and how it was that he got there. But Paul isn't concerned about them understanding everything he's been through so that they'll think, "man, this guy sure is some type of hero" and I love that about Paul, there was such a humility in his life. He wasn't concerned about people know what went on in his life, all he cared about was that people knew and understood the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ The only way that we have any record of what happened to him was thanks to Dr Luke's journal of so many of his journeys in what would later become the book of Acts. and You find out what happened to him in regards to this experience he's speaking of here in Acts ch 21 beginning in about the middle of the ch clear on out through the end of the book.

Luke dedicates a significant chunk of his writing to "the things which happened to Paul" but Paul sums it up in 6 words "the things which happened to me" and that's all he says about it. But when you read through Acts you find that things that happened to him in order to get him to this point involved being beaten by the Jews illegally arrested, the Jews thinking that he had desecrated the Temple the Romans thinking he was some Egyptian renegade who was on their "most wanted" list. A couple of trials, a conspiracy by the Jews to kill him, after which he had his trial before Felix who procrastinated over the case for *2 years* and since he wanted to do the Jews a favor when he was succeeded in office he left Paul in jail.

So Paul appealed to Caesar, had another trial before Agrippa, after which he was shipped off to Rome. Now it was on his voyage to Rome that he went through that massive storm for 14 days on the Mediterranean Sea, and Paul warned them that they shouldn't go but the centurion was more persuaded by the captain of the ship and so they took off. and Then they got into that horrible storm whereby for 14 days they didn't see the sun or the stars, they had thrown all the tackle overboard after the 3rd day and 2 weeks had gone by and they hadn't eaten anything, they had been tossed night and day, it was all they could do to keep the ship afloat, they were all green and sea sick and finally after 2 weeks Paul stood up and said, "see, I told you so."

So he said, hey let's eat a little bit because we need some nourishment to survive, and he said I want you to know that an angel of the Lord stood by me last night and as long as you do what I say this time no one will die, but the ship is as good as gone and we're all going to run aground on a certain island. (Which would be the island of Malta.) and So as the ship busted all up, Paul probably grabbed a board since he was in chains and bobbed over to the island, they were all wet and miserable, the natives saw what was going on, and so they kindled a fire. and As Paul was gathering up sticks a venomous viper came out due to the heat and fastened itself to Paul's hand.

You know as if things hadn't been going bad enough, and so all the natives sat there waiting to watch Paul die thinking man he must be one bad dude because he escaped the sea but justice won't let him live. But he just shook the snake off into the fire and continued on about his business and they all just stared at him for a long time, and when he didn't die they thought man, he must be a god (they all changed their tune). But you see God had a plan to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Island of Malta, and He did a great work there through Paul, but what would have been the odds of getting the centurion to stop on the way to Rome so that he could share the gospel with those natives?

So God just manipulated the circumstances a little (or a lot depending on your perspective of whether you're reading about it or in the middle of it), and led them all there, because there were souls there in need of Jesus Christ and Now he's been brought into Rome and he's in prison, and so when Paul says nonchalantly, "*the things which happened to me*", don't be deceived, by human standards there were some radically threatening and potentially hazardous things going on. and The Philippians were aware of his circumstances they were up to par with his ministry and they were probably thinking what's going on? "Lord there must be some mistake here, this leading apostle is in prison and his life is being wasted when he could be out there spreading the gospel. I mean he's in prison on bogus charges, and now this warrior of the cross is seemingly just sitting idle in prison."

There are times in all of our lives when we think, "Lord, there must be some mistake here," maybe due to the various circumstances or conditions that are taking place in our lives. But Paul is assuring them here of the fact everything that's happened in his life has actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, and it's a great thing to be in such a place whereby you can see the hand of God moving in your life even during those times when you are personally in a place of disadvantage. Paul the apostle was just such a man, he's basically saying hey, don't cry for me, I mean, I appreciate your concern but God is using my life even through my trials. You recall when Jesus was being led to the cross, he'd been beaten and scourged, a crown of thorns had been beaten down upon his head, and we read that, "*a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."*" Jesus knew that the Father was accomplishing a great work through His life, and that things looked bad, and by all human standards *they were*.

But in the divine scheme of things a great work was being done, in fact the greatest work in human history, the atonement for the sin of the world and a bridge to gap the insurmountable gulf between sinful man and a holy and righteous God bringing salvation mankind. Well, if you'll allow me a weak comparison for the sake of illustration, Paul by all human standards is in a bad situation, but in the divine scheme of things a great work was being done.

God was bringing salvation to those who really couldn't have been reached by a Christian through any other means. You see, to many of us this would look like a failed attempt and mistakes made, but Paul understood that these circumstances of his placed him in a unique position whereby he could share the gospel with a group of people who wouldn't have come to him or some church or synagogue, and so God took Paul to them.

If you recall when we started this epistle I told you that when you have a single mind, it's at that point that your circumstances cease working against you and begin to work for you. Paul knew that his circumstances placed him in an environment whereby the gospel could be furthered. and This word "furtherance" actually means "pioneer advance" you might say he was boldly going where no man had gone before. It's a Greek military term referring to the army engineers who go before the troops to open the way into new territory. (Wiersbe) Paul considered himself to be pioneering a new work, and God still desires that we take the gospel into new "un-pioneered" territory, and as with Paul sometimes He'll manipulate the circumstances so that all we can be is pioneers. That's how the gospel originally got to Philippi; Paul tried to go every other direction before finally heading west into Europe, but when you abandon your life to Christ, then you trust that come what may, God is in control and is working His eternal purpose in and through your life.

You just need to see it, "ok God where are You in this, I know You're here, You'll never leave me nor forsake me, just help Me to see you in it and get in the groove of what You're doing." Whatever was going on Paul sought to utilize his circumstances in such a way so as to seize the opportunity to share Christ. You see Paul was chained to a Roman soldier throughout his entire imprisonment here, and every 4-6 hours they would change guard. Now, what kind of conversation do you suppose a guy like Paul the apostle would seek to engage you in? Paul brought new meaning to the definition of "prison ministry" such to the point that I'm sure many of the guards felt more like they were his prisoners.

Paul saw a great opportunity, he had 4-6 soldiers chained to him for 4-6 hours everyday, man what a mission field. and At this point these weren't just any soldiers, these were the elite in the praetorium, the *palace guard*, those of Caesars household! and Paul was able to present a pretty solid case for Christ, so as you may assume it wasn't long before many of them came into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ But Sometimes God will use seemingly strange tools to put us into that position of pioneering the gospel, with Paul He used 3 things as it relates to this context #1 his chains, #2 his critics, and #3 his crises.

We won't see them all today, but God used Paul's chains, as we've already mentioned those chains gave him contact with the lost, not only the Roman soldiers but also the officials in the courts. Because it was up to the Roman government to determine the status of this new "Christian" sect, was it just another Jewish party, or as some of the Jews were seeking to purport was something that was dangerous that they needed to beware of, or what?

So I'm sure that it gave Paul great joy knowing that the Roman officials were forced to study the doctrines of the Christian faith and so Paul's chains gave him contact with the lost, they were a tool whereby the gospel was furthered and he's encouraging the Philippian church in light of that. Which is another great quality of Paul's, he was encouraging those who had no trial in the midst of his (literally) life threatening trial, again Jesus did the same thing, Paul truly had the mind of Christ, he had a single mind and his chains were allowing him to reach a whole new division of people that otherwise would have had nothing to do with Christianity.

Vs13

Joy isn't the absence of trouble, but the presence of Christ. Paul said, my chains are in Christ, and sometimes God will allow us to be "chained up" metaphorically speaking in order to place us in such a position so as to pioneer the gospel. So I don't know what you're going through this morning, or what you're present trial may be, but if things hadn't happened exactly as they did in your life, you wouldn't be in that position. Now, if you belong to Christ it would behoove you to seek what it is that He wants to do in the midst of it. You see the single mind looks upon circumstances as God given opportunities for the furtherance of the gospel, and rejoices in what God is going to do in and through it, instead of complaining about what God didn't do to spare you of it. Paul's chains gave him contact with the lost and the gospel was furthered. There's a second way that Paul's chains furthered the gospel.

Vs14

They gave courage to the saved, so, contact with the lost and courage to the saved. Paul's boldness was rubbing off, people seen Paul standing up and God using him and taking care of him which gave them the courage to stand up in the face of life threatening oppression as well. You know discouragement is contagious, but *encouragement* is as well and because Paul was standing boldly for Christ and encouraging the brethren it caused others to take a stand as well which in turn yielded the fruit of the furtherance of the gospel. and So Paul is telling them hey, don't be bummed, people are getting saved, the gospel is going into uncharted territory and there are more witnesses now then ever, the gospel is spreading like wildfire because I'm in prison. Man you talk about a crucified self-life, I'm not sure that I could rejoice like Paul if I was in a like position.

I wonder how many of us would after being thrown in prison on bogus charges, being left there for years in a miserable environment would be sharing the gospel and hope in Jesus Christ Or would we have come down with a terminal case of the poor me's only to quench what the Spirit wants to do and snuff out a pioneering work of God. Now there's a 3rd way that Paul was used to further the gospel that I'm not even sure if at this point he realizes because he doesn't even make mention of it. But had God not allowed this event to take place in his life, we wouldn't have the book of Eph, Phil, Col, or Philemon, never underestimate what God wants to do in your life, even from a seeming disadvantage and defeated position.

For when you are weak then you are strong. Because it's when you're weak that the Lord's strength is perfected in you because His strength (the bible says) is made perfect in weakness, how? Because you're out of the way so He can finally have His way, you're not trying to work it all out anymore so He can finally do what He's been wanting to do.

Vs15-17

These are the vs that we'll have to look at a little more in depth next week, we'll just play catch up for a while, but I want to make sure that we grab out of the scriptures all that God would have us to. But Paul was a dynamic leader and a very strong leader, and because of that Paul not only had friends and loved ones but enemies as well, and such is the price of leadership. Simply due to the fact that God is using your life will create in some envy, or jealousy, and animosity or hostility against you. and So when they do the things they do, their motives aren't pure, even if they do it in the name of Christ, in reality their striving against you and desiring a name for themselves. But ministry is never about making a name, it's about magnifying a name, the name of Jesus Christ It's not about getting credit, it's about being concealed, that Jesus Christ might be revealed in your life, again as J. B. put it, it's about decreasing that He might increase in your life. But Paul was no exception, there were those who were jealous of Paul and his ministry and now that he's in prison we have the perfect opportunity to get out their and get our thing going and make disciples after "our own fashion" as unto the Lord. and They were trying to take away from what Paul was doing because he was in prison what could he do about it, and their motives were envy and strife. But there were those who were seeking to come along side and further the gospel out of pure motives seeking to co-labor in the gospel.

Vs18

Hey, their motives are between them and the Lord, God will sort that out, but God will honor His word and so if people are hearing of Jesus Christ and giving their hearts to Him *in that* I'll rejoice. Not in the means or even the way that people are discipling them afterwards, but Paul was confident in God's ability to keep that which had been committed to Him and take care of those who out of a sincere heart were calling upon His name, and in that he would rejoice.