

Philippians 1:12-18

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 July 2018

Preacher: John Murdo Davidson

[0 : 00] If you would turn back with me to that portion of scripture that we read in Paul's letter to the Philippians chapter 1.

And I think we'll take us our text, maybe verse 12. Philippians chapter 1 and verse 12. We're going to look at verses 12 to 18. Verse 12 says this.

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. You know, the scriptures often exhort us to be filled with various godly virtues.

Paul tells us in Romans 15, 14 that we should be full of goodness. And when you think about that, you can think about a sponge.

A sponge in your hand that is full of water, it is saturated. And when we put pressure on that sponge, out comes the water.

[1 : 11] And it's very often the case with a Christian as well. When we are that sponge, and that when we are under times of pressure, or times of stress, when we are under times of pressure, what's inside of us comes out for good or for ill.

And Paul here, and when we are under pressure. And when we are under pressure. And when he's squeezed, we see what comes out of him.

When he's squeezed and he's under pressure in a jail. He sees the bigger picture.

He knows that he's serving a God. He knows that he's serving a God. He is sovereign. He has the whole universe in his hand. And his life in his hand.

And he knows that whatever happens in his life and in his experience, all will be for good. For Paul. And under pressure, what does Paul do?

[2 : 28] He continues to preach the gospel. He continues to live the life that is worthy of the gospel. And he continues to proclaim Jesus Christ.

Because the gospel alone saves. And Paul knew it, that it is only the gospel that can save. Because the gospel alone saves we. Also should proclaim Jesus Christ.

In our own difficult situations. But we also must do it with the right motives. And with joy within our hearts.

Sounds easier. Not at all. Because the gospel alone saves. We should proclaim Christ in difficult situations.

And when you read the gospel accounts of the Savior who died for us. And when we see him being squeezed. And put under pressure.

[3 : 38] As he's going up a hill. To be crucified. For the sin of the world. What do we see coming out of Jesus?

We see love. We see love. We see forgiveness. For those. That are taking him up this Calvary hill.

And we see obedience. From Jesus himself. As he does his father's will. Now Paul must do Jesus' will.

The gospel must continue to be proclaimed. In difficult situations. And in difficult circumstances. Not only for Paul.

Not only for your minister David. Not only for the elders. But for each and every one of you. That claim to be Christian today. Each and every one of us.

[4 : 40] That are born again of the spirit. We are to proclaim Christ. In all circumstances.

Whether good or ill. Because the Lord God himself. Will use difficult situations. In your life. And in my life.

To test us. And to see. What will come out of us. When we're squeezed. Sometimes we will fail.

Other times we will not. But there's one thing for sure. We will learn. And we will gain wisdom.

Through every experience. That we encounter. In this world. Whether for good. Or for ill. There is no such thing. As chance.

[5 : 38] In this life. God has your life. And my life. In his hand. He knows your future.

He knows my future. He knows the future. Of our children. And we must continue. To trust.

We must continue. To obey. And we must continue. To stand on all of his promises. In good times.

And in difficult times. Here we see Paul. In a difficult time. Because God.

The gospel alone saves. We should proclaim Christ. In difficult situations. Now that does not mean. That every person we come across. We need to give them. A three point sermon. I'd be in trouble.

[6 : 36] I hardly ever get past point one. We just need to live for Christ. And to love people. And to let our lives show.

That we belong to Jesus. God is preaching the gospel. There are times. You don't even need to open your mouth. There's times. I don't need to open my mouth.

It's how we deal with life. When we're squeezed. You see. Here. In Paul's circumstances. We see. He's in circumstantial difficulties.

In verse 12. I want you to know. Brother. She says. That what has happened to me. Has really served to advance the gospel. Paul lays out for the Philippians.

God's way of advancing the gospel. Is not the way they would expect it. He says. What has happened to me. Being chained in a dungeon.

[7 : 34] Is actually advancing the gospel. It is good for the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. His imprisonment in Rome. Is a good thing. And does he have in mind.

All his previous difficult situations. Do you remember the riots. That took place in Caesarea. Do you remember his appeal to Caesar. The threats to his life.

The beatings. The impending trial. And all this was good. For the advance of the gospel. Yes. Paul says. It is all good. For the advance of the gospel.

In other words. The world would have looked upon this church. As it was growing. And they would have seen it as broken. They would have seen it as fractured. They would have seen it.

With people who had all these difficulties. How can that make a difference. In this world. This group of people.

[8 : 35] Who call themselves Christians. You see. God's ways. Are not our ways. We would like to have it easy.

Wouldn't we. As Christians. And as churches. But it's not God's ways. For us. All this is for good. According to Paul. All this has really served.

To advance the gospel. Paul's terrible circumstances. Of being chained to a soldier. Are actually advancing the gospel. And Paul knew.

That it was only this gospel. That could save people. Paul knew. That all those around him. Were marching to a lost eternity. Unless they heard.

This gospel. And unless the Lord God. Intervened into their lives. And here he is. Chained. In a prison.

[9 : 31] And yet he is saying. This is how the gospel. Is going to advance. Paul does not say. In spite of all my difficulties. But he says.

The gospel will continue. To go out. Through all my difficulties. Because when I'm squeezed. People will see. Who. I am working for.

And who I serve. That is Jesus. You see. Paul took the divine perspective. He saw the big picture. From God's eyes. He saw the big picture.

And he rejoiced. In the big picture. That God was sovereign. Sovereign. This word. Advance. Somebody has described it.

As blazing a trail. Before the army. In time of war. His difficult circumstances. Are acting as a pioneer. Forging. New territory. For the gospel.

[10 : 30] He's a missionary. He has places to go to. He has people to meet. He has divine appointments. But he is chained. In a prison. He has people to meet.

He has people to meet. He has people to meet. He has people to meet. He has people to meet. You see. Paul's circumstantial difficulties. Did not hinder the gospel. At all. On the contrary. They acted as a springboard. For the gospel.

And we will have trials. I will have trials in this life. I will have trials in this life.

And when we hear testimonies of Christians. Who go through terrible difficulties. We look at our own difficulties. And we say. Oh. My difficulties are nothing like this Christian's difficulties.

I came across a story. Of a woman called Linda Shoup. And she's in a PCA church. A Presbyterian church in Florida. In the United States.

[11 : 27] And these are her words. Listen to her words. When he was 12 years old. He was diagnosed with synovial sarcoma. Which required the total amputation of his right arm.

My son's illness persisted over a six year time frame. And we tried many cancer treatments. Some health temporarily. Others not at all. She says.

Finally the cancer took his life. And this loss was the most difficult and traumatic for me. A secondary loss was already in place.

And beginning to erupt. My faith was temporarily shattered. She says. And I no longer understood the God I had loved and worshipped.

Since my youth. A few years before that. Her mother had been run over in a hit and run. And she died. Her teenage husband fell asleep.

[12 : 27] At the wheel of the car. And she lost him as well. Later in life. Her second husband would commit suicide.

Her second husband. And then. She recounts here. The most difficult pain. The loss of her 12 year old son. And in this.

She recounts in her story. She recounts crying out to God. Yet in her story.

She recounts that yet. She still praises God. She recounts in her story. How she uses all of her experiences.

How she uses all of her experiences. To empathize. And to help others. You see. Linda set out to use all of her experiences.

[13 : 24] To help others. With her daughter and granddaughter. Whom remained. She trained as a Christian psychologist. To PhD level. And what she does today.

Is she helps others. Who are going through the same experiences. That she once went through. Losing all those loved ones. She has written two books.

And her denomination. The PCA. Which is the biggest. Presbyterian denomination. In the United States. They use her to train. Christian counselors. Listen to her words.

Again. Have I turned to normal. After all of these losses. She says. Absolutely not. To return to normal.

Implies. That I am the same person. I was before. I encountered. All these tragic events. She says. A person is forever altered. By traumatic grief.

[14 : 28] And we choose. What we do. With these experiences. She also says. That she relies. On the one. Who comforts us. In all of our circumstances.

And all of our afflictions. So that we are able. To comfort those. Who are in any affliction. These are Paul's words. From 2nd Corinthians.

Chapter 1. Listen to the words. Again. She relies. On the one. Who comforts us. In all our afflictions. So that we are able.

To comfort those. Who are in any affliction. You know. We don't need. To become. A doctor. Of Christian psychology.

To proclaim. The Christ. The Christ. Who loved. In difficult situations. No we don't. You know. The Christian. Suffering. In times of difficulty.

[15 : 24] It is never. Wasted on God. It's never. Wasted on God. You see. He works. His purpose.

Through your. Difficult circumstances. And through mine. In fact. God. Will do some of his. Best work. In and through you. When you. Are in the midst.

Of personal crisis. You see. God's ways. Are not. Our ways. Not at all. God's ways.

Are not. Our ways. And the gospel. Will advance. Through the. Difficulties. And trials. Of his people. He will use.

You. And he will use. Me. Through all kinds. Of trials. And difficulties. And when you. Have been there. When you.

[16 : 19] Have been there. You can come. Alongside. Other people. And the Lord. Will put other people. In your midst. And you'll be able. To put your arm. Around them. And say. I understand. I understand.

I have been there. Just like. A lady. From Florida. She can truly. Say. I understand. Do you know.

Why all this. Is possible. Because. We worship. A savior. Who put his arm. Around us. And he says. I understand. I have.

Been there. I have. Been there. There is not. One of us. Who can ever. Shake a fist. At God. And say. You do not.

Understand. Jesus does. Understand. He has. Been there. Paul did not say.

[17 : 18] What is happening. To me. Is not fair. On the contrary. He said. What is happening. To me. Is accomplishing. Something. For the Lord. I love. We can be.

At our best. Witness. Through our worst. Circumstances. Also. We can be. At our best. Witness. For the Lord. In relational. Difficulties. In relational.

Difficulties. Verse 13. So that it has become. Known. Throughout the whole. Imperial guard. And to all the rest. That my imprisonment. Is. For. Christ.

You see. Paul was chained. To a guard. 24 hours a day. And the guards. Would do a six hour. Shift. Chained to Paul. And in a sense. He wasn't chained.

To them. They were chained. To him. By divine. Appointment. They were chained. To him. By divine. Appointment. You see.

[18 : 12] These guards. Who were chained. To Paul. They were the cream. Of the crop. In the empire. They were Caesar's. Personal. Bodyguards. They were the movers.

And the shakers. Of the next generation. In Rome. For all we know. Paul could have been chained. To one of the next emperors. We did not. We do not know.

But these people. They were the specialized. Handpicked. Military group. And they served. Twelve years. Protecting Caesar. And guarding all the prisoners. Who had appealed.

To Caesar. You remember. Paul appealed to Caesar. He was a Roman citizen. He had that right. So here he is. Chained to the movers. And the shakers.

The politicians. Of the next generation. The young guys. The up and coming guys. Who would hold the power. Do you see God's ways now? He was speaking.

[19 : 08] To the very top. In a dungeon. And after twelve years. These young soldiers. They moved. Into their choice of posts.

They became generals. They became senators. They became ambassadors. They went into trade. And industries. They were the movers. And the shakers. Of the next generation.

They were the opinion makers. They were the king makers. Of the next generation. Do you see God's hand at work. Through our text. Yeah. The gospel. The gospel. The gospel.

The gospel. Was going to advance. Because the gospel. Was going to affect. The upper level. Of the empire.

The lower. The lower level. Of the empire. Yes. But Paul. Was speaking. To the upper level. Of the empire. This was the upper class. Every part.

[20 : 04] Of the culture. Was being touched. By the gospel. From the lowest. To the highest. And that is how. The gospel. Advanced. And when we look at the text.

We might say. Oh. How is that advancing. The gospel. Well. There you go. There you go. So we also. Should proclaim Christ. In relational difficulties.

There he is. Chained to these guys. And I imagine. Many of them. May have been. Very hostile. Others. Maybe not. If you wanted.

To influence. The Roman empire. You could not. Have picked. A better group. To start with. Literally. Paul had been. Captive. For 24 hours.

A day. And he was sharing. The gospel. With them. Which in turn. Would lead. To conversions. Even after.

[20 : 58] After Paul. Had left. The scene of time. The gospel. That he proclaimed. Would still. Be at work. We are also. To proclaim.

Christ. In spiritual. Difficulties. Also. Verse 14. And most of the brothers. Having become. Confident. In the Lord. By my imprisonment. Are much more.

Bound. To speak. The word. Without fear. You know. In a spiritual sense. Paul's imprisonment. Looks like a disaster. For the church. For the church.

In Rome. At least. Anyway. Their leader. Who they were longing. To hear. And get to know. Cannot be among them. And what is actually. Happening is.

Paul's. Imprisonment. Is actually. Making the Christians. In Rome. More bold. To speak out. The gospel. And to share. Their faith. With others. They're becoming.

[21 : 51] More brave. A new. A new. A new. Evangelistic effort. Has sprung up. In Rome. Because of. What is happening. To Paul. So likewise.

Because the gospel. Alone. Saves. We also. Should continue. To proclaim Christ. Through difficult. Situations. In our own lives. Situations. And we should be.

Even thankful. For the difficult. Situations. And I see. The big picture. Just story. Recounted. Of Corrie Tenboom. And her sister. Betsy. And they're.

In the concentration. Camp. And they're. In barracks. Eight. And they're. Right down the corridor. From barracks. Twenty. Eight. And barracks. Twenty.

Eight. Is where the punishment. Cells were. And they'd be. Crammed. Into barracks. Eight. And they'd be. Listening. To the beatings. They'd be. Listening. To all that was. Happening.

[22 : 52] In that barracks. And in. Corrie's. Barracks. And in. Betsy's. Barracks. They seemed. To be. Left alone. They had.

Bible studies. They had. Bible smuggled in. And the women. They would have. Bible studies. And they had. Fellowship. And. God was at work. In that.

Barracks. And they were. Left alone. By the guards. And it was only. Later. That they realized. Why they were. Left alone.

By the guards. Because the whole time. They were in. Barracks. Eight. They were. Flea. Infested. All their bedding.

Was covered in. Fleas. Their hair. Was covered in. Fleas. Everything was covered. In fleas. Fleas. And the guards. Daren't go in. And Betsy.

[23 : 45] Would later. Say. That she. Thanked. God. For the fleas. Uncomfortable. As they were. God. Used the fleas.

To keep. The guards. From them. Do you see that? Do you see that? They didn't see it. At the time. It was only. Afterwards.

Secondly. Because the gospel. Alone. Saves. We should proclaim. Christ. With the right. Motives. Verses 15. To 17.

Some indeed. Preach Christ. From envy. And rivalry. But others. From goodwill. The latter. Do it out of love. Knowing that I am put here. For the defense. Of the gospel. The former.

Proclaim Christ. Out of rivalry. Not sincerely. But thinking. To afflict me. In my imprisonment. What then? Only that. In every way. Whether in pretense. Or in truth. Christ is proclaimed.

[24 : 40] And in that. I rejoice. You see. There was a minority. In Rome. Who were preaching.

The gospel. With the wrong motive. Perhaps for money. Perhaps for power. Perhaps for prestige. We don't really know. Who these people were. But.

Paul rejoices. That in amongst. There have truths. There is the truth. There is the gospel. And he rejoices. In that. They preach.

Out of envy. And rivalry. Which suggests. That there may have been. Relationships. That have gone sour. Here. In this church. In Rome. Perhaps.

Paul's opponents. Were. These type of people. Who quibbled. Over minor. Theological. Things. Maybe. Maybe. They used.

[25 : 35] His imprisonment. To exert. Their own power. We do not really know. No. We have to be careful. We must proclaim Christ.

Out of good will. And we must not. Get caught up. In petty. Rivalries. And disputes. Over minor. Theological issues.

Because it will tear. The church apart. And we know that. Don't we? We know that. Yes. We are to be people.

Of conviction. And we are to stick. To the truth. Of the gospel. Yes. We are to point out. Error. Wherever we see it. But we point out.

Error. With love. And with the right. Motives. In our heart. We are not. To become. Heresy hunters. Pointing our finger.

[26 : 36] At every other church. And every other denomination. And saying. How wrong they are. No. We are to stick. To the truth.

In love. We must always. Remember. That every time. We point the finger. There are three other fingers. Pointing back. At ourselves. Perhaps.

Paul's opponents. Were more interested. In denominations. Than in the gospel. Who knows. But we are to proclaim. Christ. As God's people.

With the motive. Of love. And joy. In our hearts. And if we do that. We cannot go wrong. And with this motive.

We will see the gospel prosper. And lastly. Verse 18. Because the gospel alone saves. We should proclaim Christ.

[27 : 40] With joy. If we do not have that joy. Within our hearts. We are to see. As well not speaking. People are to see.

That whatever we go through. In life circumstances. That we still have that joy. And love. Within our hearts. Difficult as it may be. At times. You know.

Our circumstances. Should not rob us. Of that joy. That we have in Jesus. And in the gospel. Only that in every way.

Whether in pretense. Or in truth. Christ is proclaimed. And in that. I rejoice. I remember a minister. In Dundee.

Preaching. When I was there. And he. Described this. As. He's a minister. And he's in a small church. And he's got about 25 people. In his church.

[28 : 39] And a new church. Moves in next door. And there's about 3,000 people. And things are going great. And there you are.

In your little church. With 25 people. What does the Lord expect. Of these 25 people. And of the minister. He expects them. To rejoice.

That there is a church. With 2,500 people. Next door. As long as the truth. Is proclaimed. They are to rejoice. That there are brothers. And sisters.

Next door. And that the gospel. Is going forward. That might be difficult. But that is what we are commanded.

To do. Somebody once said. In adversity. We usually want God. To do a removing job. When he wants to do.

[29 : 35] An improving job. To realise. The worth of the anchor. We need to feel the storm. To feel the storm. What is our anchor tonight?

It is Jesus. It is Jesus. It is the truth. Of the gospel. It is what binds us together. It is what binds us together.

And no matter what we are going through. In life's journey. Whether for good or for ill. We are to continue to proclaim. The Christ who loved us.

And gave himself for us. And pray to God. That we would see the big picture. In our life's experience. Through difficult times.

That is an illustration I use. Quite often. That you have heard it before from me. You see sometimes God. Will calm the storm. Yes he will.

[30 : 33] Sometimes he will calm the storm. But other times. He will let the storm rage. And he will calm. His child. And that is what he is doing here for Paul.

That is what he will do for you. And what he will do for me. The storm may rage. But we are to continue. To proclaim Jesus.

To everyone we come across. Whether they are hostile to us. Whether they are indifferent to us. And to the gospel. All your appointments.

That you will have God willing tomorrow. Are divine appointments. Take the chance. Seize the day. Tell them about Christ.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father. Heavenly Father. We thank you indeed. For the power of the gospel. And our prayer here this evening. Is that you would energize us. And Lord.

[31 : 36] That you would encourage us. And that you would fill our hearts. Oh God. And that we would continue. Through life's journey. To look to you. And to be filled by you.

And to proclaim you. No matter what life has in store for us. And help us even to be thankful for the trials that come before us.

Difficult as it may be. But you are, oh Lord, our sovereign. And our lives are in your hands. And for that we're thankful. So Father, would you go before us now.

Would you bless us. In Jesus name. Amen.