

Notes On Philippians: The Call of the Gospel

Chapter 1:1 – 11

I. Read The Bible Text

II. Answer these Warm-Up Questions (To get your mind in gear)

1. What one gift if you received it next week we make you genuinely happy?
2. Have you ever had a good experience on a sports team or in a business partnership/collaboration? Have you had a bad experience? Was there any significant difference between the two experiences that made one a success and one a failure?

II. Read this Summary

In this passage Paul is calling the Philippians to partnership in the gospel. He reflects on how God's grace has already done so much for them, and he is so thrilled that he prays some "power prayers" for them. Here's what he prayed:

- that their love may abound
- that they would have knowledge and discernment
- that they would approve what is excellent
- that they would be pure and holy until the day of Christ

Powerful stuff. Why? Why did Paul pray this for these Philippians?

The answer is verse 5:

BECAUSE of your partnership with gospel from the first day until now.

These Philippians were great partners of the gospel to the degree that it moved Paul to pray for them. And Paul leaves them with a power promise (v.6): *He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

That's a rich passage. But let's dig deeper.

IV. Digging Deeper

The Philippians were thrilled about partnership with the gospel. But they weren't immune from struggles.

Consider this word: futile. Here's a definition: Incapable of producing results; useless; not successful; not worth attempting. Ouch!

How could the Philippians have felt futile. Maybe because they were sending money to support an old guy in prison rather than starting new churches in Macedonia.

What about you? Are there areas in your life where you feel futile in your effort to follow Christ? Take a moment to write down any of those areas:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

V. The Bottom Line

The Philippians, just like us, were susceptible to feeling of futility. The gospel is the answer to feelings of futility. We feel futile if we think that our efforts don't really matter in the grand scheme of things. And that's what so beautiful about the gospel – God take the futility of our lives and makes them significant. How? With the significance of Jesus. Jesus, the significant King, became insignificant to save those who were insignificant and restore them to the significance for which God had created them.

In other words – Jesus subjected himself to the futility of death on the cross to rescue those who lived under the futility of sin. Of course – the death of Jesus was not futile at all – it completely accomplished God's purpose.

Look at I Corinthians 15:17-22

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

It is in the resurrection of Christ that we have our victory. Not only our salvation – but our effectiveness in our gospel partnership. It is not in our power to be great partners – but by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us, God's purposes can be fulfilled! Our job? To die daily to self, follow Jesus, and trust the working of God in us and through us. And that is significant!

Notes On Philippians: The Call of the Gospel

The City

Today there are cows silently wandering through the large, fertile plain that was the site of ancient Philippi. Located in eastern Macedonia near the northern coast of the Aegean Sea, it was founded by the father of Alexander the Great, Philip II, in 356 BC. Due to its strategic location, it served as a military base, and was primarily occupied by serving and retired military personnel and their families.

The Church (Acts 16)

Paul and Silas were sent by the church in Antioch on a mission to visit the churches Paul had established on his first missionary journey. While on this trip, Paul saw a vision of a man of Macedonia calling for help. He concluded that God wanted them to go and preach the gospel in Macedonia. This was the first entrance of the gospel in to Europe.

Paul's typical M.O. was to start in the synagogue and reach open Jews with the gospel. The Jewish population of Philippi was such that there were not enough people to form a synagogue. There were a small group of Jews that would gather by a river where they had established a place of prayer. Paul preached to a small group who had gathered, one of whom was a businesswoman named Lydia, a Gentile worshipper of God. *And the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message (Acts 16:14).*

Lydia became the first Christ-follower in Europe. She invited Paul and Silas to stay with her, and they made her home their mission base.

Soon after this, Paul got perturbed by a demon-possessed girl and cast the evil spirit out of her. It caused an uproar in the city, and he and Silas were thrown in jail. Rather than complain and murmur about their circumstances, Paul and Silas had a big praise-fest. In the middle of their midnight worship session, God freed them from prison with an earthquake. In the midst of the chaos that ensued, Paul had chance to preach to the jailer, who also turned to follow Christ, and got baptized along with his family.

That's how the church in Philippi was started. All of that happened in the year 50AD, about 30 years after Jesus had been crucified and raised from the dead.

The Letter

A little more than ten years later, Paul was in prison again. This time it was in Rome, and this time his life was on the line. Again, Paul used his time in prison fruitfully – his captivity became a time of fruitful gospel ministry, to the degree that people in Caesar's own household heard the gospel.

Hearing of Paul's circumstances, the church in Philippi took up a collection and sent it with a man named Epaphroditus. While in Rome, he got sick, so his return to Philippi was delayed. Paul wrote a letter to accompany Epaphroditus on his return. The letter is a thank-you note for the gift the church had sent, but it is so much more.

Many of Paul's letters were written to correct problems in churches. There seemed little to correct in Philippi. Mainly, he wanted them to live lives worthy of the gospel. He wanted their partnership with him in the gospel to be more than a one-time gift – he wanted it to be a lifestyles.

As we study this letter, God is speaking the same things to us. He is calling us to be whole-hearted followers of Christ. He is calling us to be focused on the Kingdom of God. And he is calling us to a gospel-centred life. It is finally in this context of a whole-

hearted gospel partnership that Paul writes *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

The Call of the Gospel

The Call of the Gospel

In this short book, Paul writes to the Philippians, calling them to a gospel-centred life.

These are some of the ways the gospel calls to us:

- 1:5 – a partnership with the gospel
- 1:7 – the confirmation of the gospel
- 1:12 – the advance of the gospel
- 1:16 – the defense of the gospel
- 1:27 – to live a life worthy of the gospel
- 2:22 – the service of the gospel
- 4:3 – contending for the cause of the gospel
- 4:15 – knowing the gospel

What is the gospel? Very simply – that God created us to know, enjoy, and worship him. We sabotaged the relationship with our sin. God then made a way to restore what we destroyed through our fall into sin.

Jesus our promised saviour came to this earth:

- He lived a perfect life – the life we should have lived but didn't
- He died a sacrificial death – taking our place and bearing the penalty for sin that should have come to us
- He rose from the dead as a demonstration of the effectiveness of his sacrifice and as a testimony to his power.

The gospel says that Jesus has done for us what we could never do for ourselves, and so our only hope of salvation from sin is to trust in him and what he has done. Some people are far from God because they completely disregard God and live a life of outward sin and rebellion against God's laws. Other people are from God because they secretly think that

At the centre of the gospel, of course, is Jesus Christ Himself. And we meet Jesus in Philippians – Jesus King who left heaven to come to earth as a man to serve and save us. We meet him chapter 3 as the one who completely fulfilled the law of God and gave us his righteousness. The good news is summarized in those two things together: Jesus, the Son of God, became a man and died to save us. In so doing, he made a way for us to receive his righteousness as a gift.

So at the centre of Philippians we are brought back to Christ - - the servant King who humbled himself to the point of death on the cross that we might share his righteousness. As God's grace works in our lives, we become partners of the gospel - not only in partaking of it, but also in advancing it. A gospel-worthy life forsakes all for him, has no righteousness of its own, strains for the prize, and does whatever it takes for the gospel to win.

That is the call of the gospel, and that is what we are going to unpack in this series.