

Philippians

Lesson #4, Chapter 1:12-20

As you prepare to study God's Word, come expectantly with your sins confessed, relying on Him to sow great truths in your heart.

1. What does Paul want the believers at Philippi to know? See verse 12.
2. Before we discover more about what Paul's circumstances, what can you learn about his attitude towards them from verse 12? Paul's response gives you insight into his life purposes and what he valued most. What do you discover?
3. What do you learn about Paul's circumstances according to verse 13?
4. In the wisdom of God, what things resulted from Paul's circumstances? See verses 13-14. See also Acts 28:30-31; Philippians 4:22.
5. The gospel advanced in spite of Paul's imprisonment. When God purposes something, what is the result? See Genesis 50:20; Job 42:2; Daniel 4:35; Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:15-18; Ephesians 1:11.
6. What do you *need to know and believe about God*, if you are going to apply faith like Paul did when your circumstances seem to be taking you backward rather than forward?

“While others may have seen the end of missionary activity, Paul saw the new ways the gospel could advance. The events which seemed to inhibit the freedom of the gospel became its springboard. Paul did not say “in spite of” these events, but rather “through them.” There is a note of sacrifice here. Paul’s private concerns did not matter; the gospel did.” Richard Melick¹

7. Paul spends quite a bit of time reassuring the Philippian brethren about his situation. Based on his comments thus far in the chapter, what do you think they were concerned about for Paul? How would Paul’s response ease their worries?

8. In verses 12-14 we see Paul’s response gave the brethren courage. Our response to our circumstances can also go a long way to strengthening the faith of others. What do you notice from Psalm 119:74-75; Philippians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8; 3 John 1:3-4? How does this truth motivate you even more to respond well in difficult circumstances?

9. *Most of the brethren* (from verse 14) were encouraged and strengthened to speak forth the Word of God because of Paul’s steadfastness of faith. In verses 15-16, list what you learn about the groups Paul describes.

10. In verses 15-16 Paul adds more information about “the brethren” mentioned in verse 14.² Whether they were preaching Christ from pure motives or not, Paul indicates they are fellow saints. We learn these “brethren” are operating out of envy and selfish ambition as they purposely cause strife and hope to grieve Paul. Whoa! That is so naughty! And yet,

¹Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 70.

² Some take the view that those who are preaching from selfishly wicked motives are the Judaizers. Though it’s possible Paul meant this group, a better view is that this group are believers, albeit misguided ones. One reason for this view is that Paul is still talking about the response of “most of the brethren” from verse 14. Another reason for taking this view is that the selfish preachers are misguided believers is because the Judaizers were false teachers, who taught that the Gentile converts had to become Jews in order to be saved. If the selfish preachers were spreading a false gospel, Paul in *no way* would have rejoiced in that proclaimed message, yet in verse 18, Paul rejoices that Christ is proclaimed. And still another reason for taking this view is simply context. In his comments thus far in Chapter 1, Paul has not made reference to the Judaizers and their false gospel. It seems best to say that the strife causing preachers were misled believers, since Paul is glad that even through them the gospel is preached, and Christ is made known.

who among us can say that we haven't struggled with attitudes like this before? We can all fall into similar sins. How would you counsel these erring brethren to turn from their fleshly attitudes and actions? Here are a few verses to get you started, but feel free to choose your own or add more: Psalm 119:11; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 John 1:9.

11. Define *appointed* [Strong's 2749 (ESV, NIV *put here*)]. What revealing and important information do we learn about Paul from his use of the word *appointed* in verse 16 (the NKJV moves it to verse 17)? See also 1 Corinthians 9:16-17; Galatians 2:7-8; 2 Timothy 1:11-12.

12. What was it about Paul's *appointment* by God to preach the gospel that moved some of the brethren to jealously preach the gospel? You might find 1 Corinthians 3:1-23 helpful as you form your answer.

13. In verse 17 we see the term "selfish ambition" used (NKJV places it in verse 16). See what you discover about the word *ambition* [Strong's #2052].

14. Though some of the brethren sought to put themselves forward, using the preaching of the gospel to do so, how did Paul choose to respond? See verse 18. How does Paul's response shine light on his own motives for preaching the gospel?
 - a. Though there are many trials associated with Paul's imprisonment and the unkind actions of other believers, Paul chose to exercise faith over his feelings. What are some things we need to know and implement to follow his example? See Psalm 57:1-3; Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 10:35-36; 11:6; 12:1-3; James 1:2-4.

15. Underlying everything Paul did was one all-consuming passion to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. Look up the following verses to see the different ways Paul explained his single-minded focus. See 1 Corinthians 10:31; 16:22; 2 Corinthians 5:9, 14-15; Romans 14:7-8; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21; 3:7-14. What things stand out to you from those verses?
- a. Consider, your own focus and passion toward the Lord. In what ways are you similar to Paul, and in what ways could you devote yourself to the Lord more?
 - b. What verse best sums up your own devotion toward the Lord? Choose a verse from the ones above or choose your own.
16. Sometimes it's difficult to reconcile how God would allow people to continue to minister and preach the gospel when we know their service comes from worldly or wicked motives. Yet, our God's ways are not our ways. He, as Thomas Watson said, is able to "strike a straight blow with a crooked stick." When we see others serving out of selfish ambition, what do we need to keep in mind concerning them—and ourselves? See Romans 12:16-21; 1 Corinthians 4:1-7; Galatians 6:7-10.
- "He was able to rejoice, not in the selfishness of his critics, but in the fact that *Christ was being preached!* There was no envy in Paul's heart. It mattered not that some were for him and some were against him. All that mattered was the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!" ~Warren Wiersbe³
17. The wording of the NASB and NKJV in verse 19 can be a little confusing. The ESV and NIV did a great job translating the verse to help us understand what Paul was communicating. The NIV says, "for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance." From verse 19, what things can you identify that bring comfort to Paul while he undergoes many trials?

³Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 69.

18. In verse 19 Paul says he will be *delivered* in some way. The clue to what he meant is found in verse 20. What do you learn about the deliverance he looked for?

19. What is Paul's earnest expectation and hope from verse 20? Define *earnest expectation* [Strong's #603 (ESV *eager expectation*; NIV *eagerly expect*)].

20. In his letters, Paul often refers to not being put to shame or doing things in vain. What do you learn from the following verses about Paul's attitudes toward his labors and sense of purpose? See 1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 6:3; Galatians 4:11; Philippians 1:20; 2:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:1; 3:5.

21. What are some ways those same attitudes and purposefulness might show up in your life?

22. As Paul reassures the Philippians about his circumstances in verses 12-20, what things stand out to you that you would like to implement in your own life? What truths encouraged you from this lesson?

"It does not matter how things go with him. If he dies, his will be the martyr's crown; if he lives, his will be the privilege still to preach and to witness for Christ. As Charles Ellicott nobly puts it, Paul is saying: 'My body will be the theatre in which Christ's glory is displayed.' Here is the terrible responsibility of all Christians. Once we have chosen Christ, by our lives and conduct we bring either glory or shame to him. Leaders are judged by their followers; and Christ is judged by us." ~William Barclay⁴

⁴William Barclay, *The Letters to Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated, The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 31.

“Dearest, how foolish I have been! Why! what does it matter what becomes of me, if the Lord shall but be glorified? . . . If Christ be exalted,” he said,—and his face glowed with holy fervour,—“let Him do as He pleases with me; my one prayer shall be, that I may die to self, and live wholly for Him and for His honour. Oh, wifey, I see it all now! Praise the Lord with me!” ~Susannah Spurgeon recounting a story about her husband, Charles Spurgeon⁵

⁵C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife and His Private Secretary, 1854–1860*, vol. 2 (Chicago; New York; Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899), 192.