

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

The Heart of an Undershepherd

Philippians 1:3-11

2008

Introduction

As Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was incarcerated in Rome, awaiting trial before Caesar. He couldn't visit this church, but he could write and he could pray -- and he did!

Quote: Morgan

“This is Paul’s great singing letter. It was at Philippi that he had sung in prison at midnight, in the company of Silas. Now he is singing again in prison, this time in Rome.”

Last week we discovered some of the keys to Paul’s joy and peace as he sat on “Death Row”:

1. He was a follower of and bondservant of Jesus Christ - Phil 1:1
 - a. He wasn't in charge of his life - His life belonged to God
 - b. He didn't have any problems - God had problems
 - c. He had one goal -- to honor God in any and every situation
 - d. He refused to play the victim
2. He was others centered - Phil
 - a. He humbled himself and elevated others
 - b. He openly encouraged those around him
3. He accepted his high position and identity in Christ - he was a saint rather than a sinner
4. He understood and rejoiced in the unmerited grace of God

I Paul's Heart of Thanksgiving

A. His memory of the church prompted **thanksgiving** [Verse 3]

Remember = Mneia = “To recollect or recital”

Paul’s wonderful inventory of memories of the Philippians and the fellowship they shared was a source of great joy to Paul!

And what blessed memories they were. Do you remember them?

1. The first Sabbath by the river when Lydia opened her heart to the gospel
2. The demon-possessed girl whom Paul delivered by the power of the Spirit of God
3. Being stripped, beaten and thrown into jail but experiencing intense joy as they worshipped God in the night.
4. As they were witnesses of God’s miraculous earthquake deliverance
5. Having everyone’s jail cell doors flying open but no one making a move to escape because the power and presence of God was so thick that no one wanted to leave.
6. The jailer being converted along with his whole household

Application: You often find what you're long for!

Thomas Hardy said, "Some people can find the manure pile in any meadow."

But if you want more joy in your life, develop a lifestyle of remembering and reciting God's blessings. Thank Him for your family, friends, co-workers (even for the difficult ones) and for His many blessings in your life. Rehearse them in thanksgiving prayer to God and in encouraging words to the individuals.

1 Thess 5:16-18 "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

B. His memory of the church prompted prayer: [Verse 4-5]

Most of Paul's letters begin with wonderful expressions of his constant, unceasing and fervent prayer for the saints (Rom 1:9-10; Eph 1:15; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Tim 1:3; Philem 4)

1. He prayed with **joy**

Joy = Chara = "Cheerfulness, calm delight, exceeding gladness"

This is rather remarkable, in light of Paul's imprisonment, that his first reference to his own feelings or frame of mind in this letter is JOY!

In Phil 4:1, Paul reveals that his fellow believers were his "joy and crown"

Quote: Morgan

"It is a glorious revelation of how life in fellowship with Christ triumphs over all adverse circumstances. The triumph, moreover, is not that of stoical indifference. It is rather the recognition of the fact that all apparently adverse conditions are made allies of the soul and ministers of victory, under the dominion of the Lord."

2. He acknowledged their **fellowship** in the gospel

Fellowship = Koinonia = "Partnership, participation, mutual communion"

How had the church participated in the gospel?

1. Personally by receiving the gospel
2. Financially by supporting Paul - Phil 4:15-16
3. Evangelistically by sharing the faith

a. "From the first day until now"

1. From the day Lydia opened her heart to the gospel by the river - Ac 16:13-14
2. To the day they sent money to Paul through Epaphroditus - Phil 4:18

C. His memory of the church prompted **confidence**: [Verse 6]

Confident = Peitho = "To be absolutely convinced, assured or persuaded"

1. God **began** a good work in them

Important note: Salvation is the work of God!!

- Salvation is granted on behalf of Christ - Phil 1:29-30
- Salvation is a right that is given by God - John 1:12
- Salvation is granted by God - Acts 11:18
- Salvation is given by divine appointment - Acts 13:48
- Salvation is a gift -- not by works - Eph 2:8-9
- Salvation is the work of God - Phil 2:13
- Salvation is the result of God's sovereign choice - 2 Thess 2:13
- Salvation is only possible through God's enablement - John 6:65

In other words, God is the one responsible for our salvation. According to Ephesians 2:9, even our faith is a gift from God.

Quote: Spurgeon

“The work of grace has its root in the divine goodness of the Father, it is planted by the self-denying goodness of the Son, and it is daily watered by the goodness of the Holy Spirit.”

2. God would carry that work on to **completion**

Complete = Epiteleio = “To execute, accomplish, perform”

Heb 12:1-2 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the **author** and **perfecter** of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Application: Rest assured, my friends! What God begins -- God finishes!!

This is a good thing to keep in mind when you see the incomplete canvas of your life, the lives of others or when you face the uncertainties of life.

a. Until the day of Christ Jesus

There are two phrases that need to be distinguished -- “The Day of the Lord” and “The Day of Christ Jesus”:

1. The Day of the Lord [AKA: **The Day** (1 Thes 5:4); **That Day** (2 Ths 1:10)]
Meaning: **“The day when sinners will be judged”**
2. The Day of Christ Jesus [AKA: The Day of Christ; Lord JC (1 Cor 1:7)]
Meaning: **“The day when the saints will be rewarded and glorified”**
 - The day when we stand before the Bema Seat of Christ - 2 Cor 5:9-10
 - The day when we will be rewarded for our works - 1 Cor 3:10-15
 - The day when we will receive praise from God - 1 Cor 4:5

Application: You have a glorious future in Christ! Maranatha, Lord Jesus!

II Paul's Heart of Affection

A. He had reason to be thankful, joyful and confident: [Verse 7a]

1. He had them in his **heart**

1 Thss 2:8 “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”

Application: This kind of love should characterize every believer!

1. This kind of love was modeled by Jesus Christ - 1 Jn 3:16
2. This kind of love comes only by being taught by God - 1 Thess 4:9-10
3. This kind of love is evidence that we are born again - 1 Jn 3:14
4. This kind of love informs the world that we are disciples of Jesus - Jn 13:35

B. He acknowledged their partnership in God's **grace** [Verse 7b]

Partnership = Sughoinonos = “A co-participant or companion”

They were partners with Paul in his imprisonment and in his defense of the gospel.

1. Whether he was in chains - 2 Tim 1:8

2. Whether he was:

a. Defending the gospel - Phil 1:16

Defending = Apologia = “To answer or defend”

b. Confirming the gospel - Heb 6:16

Confirming = Bebaiosis = “To establish”

Application:

Prov 17:17 “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

C. He longed for them all with the **affection** of Christ Jesus [Verse 7c]

To long for = Epipotheo = “To dote upon, intensely crave, earnestly desire”

Affection = Splagchnon = “Literally; spleen, intestines or bowels”

[Emotions, good or bad, are felt most in the internal area of the chest and stomach]

So if a person wanted to express the deepest love and compassion in the Greek language, they would say, “I love you from the depths of my bowels.”

Try that on your next anniversary or birthday card!

Note: Paul was a man of towering intellect, powerful speech, courageous leadership, unflinching obedience and tireless service to God, but he was also a man who cherished his friends and was willing to openly tell them so.

Application: Maybe it's time for you to express your affection more freely!

Col 3:12 "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion [splanchnon], kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

III Paul's Heart of Intercession

Another trademark of Paul's ministry was his heart of intercession!

Application: Here we find another key to Paul's joy -- others'-centered intercession!

Eph 6:18 "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."

A. He prayed that their love might: [Verse 9]

1. Abound in **knowledge**

Abound = Perisseuo = "To super abound"

Knowledge = Epignosis = "An experiential comprehension of the facts"

Col 1:9-13 "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

How do we abound and grow in this kind of knowledge?

- a. Through the study of and obedience to God's Word
- b. Through the emulating the life of Jesus Christ
- c. Through the power of the Holy Spirit

2. Abound in depth of **insight**

Insight = Aisthesis = "Perception, discernment, judgment, wisdom" [Aesthetic]

Quotes:

Charles Spurgeon: "Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom."

I think what Paul is saying is, "Let your love for one another be guided by knowledge (correct information) and tempered by insight (proper application of information).

Illustrations:

The story of the Prodigal Son - Luke 15:11-32: The father's wisdom to not act!

The man sleeping with his step-mother - 1 Cor 5:1-5: Paul's wisdom to act!

What's the fruit of this kind of abounding love, knowledge and insight?

Paul mentions 4 things in the form of a prayer:

B. He prayed that they might: [Verse 10-11]

1. Be able to discern what is **best**

Discern = Dokimazo = “To test or approve”

It was used in classical Greek for:

1. Testing metal to determine its properties, strength and purity
2. Testing money to be sure that it wasn't counterfeit

Best = Diaphero = “Most excellent, of greatest value”

How can we distinguish between what is good and what is best?

Rom 12:2 “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Application: The blessing of testing and approving of what is best!

You will avoid an undisciplined life marked by a lack of self-control, impulsive behavior, reactionary responses, knee-jerk emotions and rash decisions.

You will avoid a life of regrets!!

2. Be **pure**

Pure = Eilikrines = “Judged by the sunlight, tested as genuine”

Compound word: **Heile** = “The sun's rays” **Krines** = “To judge”

In Greek it means "Sun-tested". In Latin (sincera) it means “without wax”

Etymology: In Paul's day, artisans would make sculptures or pottery with clay that would sometimes develop cracks during the drying process. In order to pass these defective items off as perfect, some of the merchants would fill the cracks with wax to hide the crack. But a wise buyer would put the item out in the hot sun for a short time to see if any wax had been used to cover over an imperfection. If so, the sun would melt it and the crack would become visible or “Sun tested”.

Application: God reveals our imperfections through the heat of life's trials!

1 Peter 1:6-7 “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith -- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire -- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

3. Be blameless

Blameless = Aprosokopos = “Inoffensive, not leading to sin, faultless, w/o offense”

Luke 17:1-3 “Jesus said to his disciples: **Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for**

him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves.”

Application: Is your life a stumbling block to those around you? Or is it an asset?
Acts 24:16 “So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.”

4. Be filled with the **fruit** of righteousness
Filled with = Lit: “Having been filled”, signifying a past event with continuing results.
Righteousness = Dikaiousune = “Uprightness, virtue, justice”
Prov 11:30 “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life ...”

What, exactly, is the fruit that proceeds from a righteousness life?

1. The fruit of our character - Gal 5:22
 2. The fruit of our deeds
Isa 3:10 “Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds.”
 3. The fruit of a multiplied life - Mat 28:19-20
- a. Which comes through Jesus Christ
True spiritual fruit is achieved, not by human effort, but by abiding in Christ:
John 15:4-5 “**Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.**”

Application: Fruitfulness is related to the strength of your relationship with Christ!

- b. Which leads to
1. The glory of God
John 15:8 “**This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**”
 2. The **praise** of God
Eph 1:11-12 “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.”

Summary of keys to Paul’s joy and peace as he sat on “Death Row”:

1. He was a follower of and bondservant of Jesus Christ
2. He was others centered even in the midst of his own crisis
3. He accepted his high position and identity in Christ - he was a saint rather than a sinner
4. He understood and rejoiced in the unmerited grace of God

5. He remembered and recited the good in others
6. He made it a practice to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others
7. He was confident in God's power to finish what He had started
8. He openly and transparently loved people
9. He had a lifestyle of interceding in prayer for others

Conclusion

Unbeliever: Do you have joy in your heart today? Are you truly at peace with your life?

1. **Admit** and repent of your sin - Acts 3:19
2. **Believe** in Jesus Christ - John 3:16
3. **Confess** Jesus as your Lord - Rom 10:9

Believer: Do you have an undershepherd's heart for those under your authority?

1. What if we treated our spouse like Paul treated the Philippians?
2. What if we treated our kids like Paul treated the Philippians?
3. What if we treated our friends and neighbors like Paul treated the Philippians?