

Philippians 3:12 - 4:1

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[0 : 00] I cry positively, this has already been made, the point has already been made a number of times already.

! The reason that Paul writes at the church in Philippi is to encourage them to stand firm in the Gospel in the midst of suffering.

Turn with me first of all to chapter 1 verse 27. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

So that whether I come and see you or I am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, but you have one mind striving side by side with the faith of the Gospel, not frightened in anything by your opponents.

He encourages them to stand firm and now look for one. Therefore my brothers whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm, thus in the Lord.

[1 : 32] I love the love. This is the core of Paul's message to the Philippians. And he encourages them to stand firm. If you like these two passages are the bookends.

And the core, the central message is to stand firm. How does he encourage them? Well he sets for them examples to follow. So first of all we had Christ's example, the ultimate example, his humility, his embracing of suffering.

When we came to Timothy and Epaphroditus, you might remember, men whom we should honour, or the Philippians should honour, seek to imitate. And now here in our passage, Paul sets himself as an example for them.

He is in prison in Rome, and yet he is rejoicing. Verse 17, Brothers, join in imitating me. Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

What message causes somebody to rejoice in the midst of suffering and hardship imprisonment? What do you mean? Well, in our passage, here I want to draw out three points.

[2 : 49] Three encouragements which are also going to encourage us to stand firm in the Gospel. And three points to speak of what the Gospel is. Point number one.

The Gospel is the hope of perfection in Christ. Take a look here in verse 12. The Gospel is the hope of perfection in Christ. It is not that I have already obtained this, or I am already perfect.

But I press on to make it my own. This is astounding when we really think about this. Paul thinks that one day he is going to be made perfect.

How? Where? When? Why? Well, the hope is this, that when Christ returns, He will transform our lowly bodies into the likeness of His glorious body.

Look in here at verse 21. He will transform our sin stained bodies to be like His glorious body. He will transform our sin stained world.

[3 : 54] And there will be no longer tears, pain, suffering, affliction, hardship and toil.

Now there are some who teach, aren't there, that Christ has come, He has broke His power on the cross. We no longer need to accept any form of suffering, whether that be ill health or poverty or premature death, etc.

While this is not the Gospel, what does Paul say? He has not already obtained perfection. That He waits for when Christ returns. That is when perfection, when completion will come.

I don't know how to call it. The prosperity Gospel? No. It is not a Gospel. It is not the Gospel. In fact, it is not different.

It is not different to what the world's response to suffering is. Namely, delusion. Now we know that people in the world, they recognize that suffering takes place.

[5 : 04] But they choose to delude themselves by focusing on their idolatry and finding temporal joy, so-called joy in their idolatry.

Family, romance, sex, money. These are delusions in their temporary. Christians, we do not console ourselves in these delusions. We console ourselves in the reality of Christ Jesus, His death and His resurrection.

We do not console ourselves in present situations, in the present context. We console ourselves with joy in our hope of Christ's return.

We will make everything complete and perfect. That is not true. Point one. It is the Gospel. It is our hope of perfection.

[6 : 02] Point two. Somewhat related. The Gospel is our present day certainty.

What is it that the Lord speaks at the beginning of his lesson? Verse 6. Verse 6. I am certain of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.

When? In the day of Christ. Well, this is the Gospel. It is not just a future hope.

It is not just looking into the future. But it is also a present day reality. He has begun a good work.

We see this also in our passage. In chapter 3.

Look here at verse 16. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. They have already attained something. Well, what have they attained?

[7 : 02] What has Paul attained? What has the Philippian church attained? If it is not a sinless life. If it is not a life free from suffering and affliction. Look down at verse 20.

That our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Saviour. Our citizenship is here now presently in heaven.

That is what we have already attained. When I have been thinking about this metaphor, really it has been very beautiful to my mind.

I don't know how familiar we are with ancient customs. But obviously to be a Roman citizen was an extreme privilege.

It was a privileged status within society, economically. And even in the eyes of the law it was a privilege. And one of the beauties was that anyone could become a Roman citizen.

[8 : 04] Even a slave. If they worked hard enough. If they toiled for their master faithfully. They could become a Roman citizen. Well, is that what Paul is talking about when he talks about becoming a citizen of heaven?

Is it that if you work hard enough you can earn your citizenship? No, it's not. He says here at the end of verse 12. It says, Christ Jesus has made me his own.

For of this I do not consider that I have made it my own. It's not something that Paul has done. It's something that Christ has worked. We see that again in verse 9 in chapter 3.

That I may gain Christ and be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own. It's not something that he works. But what?

That which comes with faith in Christ Jesus. The righteousness from God that depends on faith. I think one of the beauties about this metaphor of citizenship is that it's still very relevant today isn't it?

[9 : 08] People will toil and make huge sacrifices to become British citizens or American citizens.

Even professionals from different countries will come and work as cleaners and take the lowest job in society. They will work and toil so that they can earn the British citizenship. How amazing it is that the more glorious citizenship, this heavenly citizenship is offered freely.

It is offered freely and it is given to those who repent and believe. I think it's also an encouragement when we look back to verse 16.

Let us hold true brothers of what we have attained. We have attained this heavenly citizenship. Let us live in light of this. Lastly, my third point is this.

If you take from the passage. The Gospel makes a demand for our whole hearted affection. Now look, we have already covered in the space of Philippians.

[10 : 30] This is a very emotional letter. Paul is very emotional when he is writing. In verse 1 of chapter 4. My brother is whom I love and long for.

My joy and my crown. His affection for the Christians is shown also at the beginning of chapter 1, verse 8.

God is my witness how I yearn for you. For all affection for Christ Jesus. So he has affection for the believers. You also see he has affection for Christ.

He considers everything rubbish. He might know Christ Jesus. And here in this passage we see he also has affection for unbelievers.

The cure of verse 18. Very powerful. For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears. Walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

[11:30] Who is it that Paul is crying for? Most probably these are people who showed signs of believing. They showed signs of believing in Christ.

And he told the Philippians about this. But then they turned their back on the Gospel. And it grieves them. And they said, should we be surprised?

Should we be surprised? Should we be surprised that this happened? Should we be surprised when it does happen? No. We shouldn't. Why? We can think of Jesus' own teaching.

The power of the sower. In the sower sows the seed, the word of God. Some falls on the good soil. It grows up, it bears fruits.

Some falls on the rocky ground. It starts to grow. But when the sun and the hardships of this world come against it, it withers and perishes. Because its roots have not been found deeply.

[12:29] Should we be surprised? No. Should we be grieved? Should our hearts be broken?

Is Paul just one of these emotional kind of guys? Or is this something we also need to be imitating him in?

I think it becomes very clear when we look at Christ's own example for us. When Christ came to Jerusalem, He looked out over the city for those who only days later would crucify Him.

He wept. He wept. He wept. He wept for His enemies. I want to say something very plainly now.

I want to say something bluntly, if not for your benefit then for my own benefit. When we fail, when we fail to be grieved for our unbelieving neighbors, colleagues, friends and family.

[13:37] When we fail to be grieved, it is a clear and unmistakable sign for us that we are not living in a knowledge of God's grace.

How can I say that? Well this is the gospel.

Once we were alienated from God. Once we were enemies in our minds towards God because of our evil behavior.

Once we were far from Him. Once we have done nothing in word or deed, fault, ambition, except to war against Him and force an offense.

When we were brought into His presence, clothed in rags of filth and hungry, deserving only His judgment.

[14:41] He had mercy on us. He fed us with His bread of life. He robed us in clothes worthy of royalty.

He cleansed us by His blood. He adopted us as sons. This is the gospel. We were enemies. We were enemies and He reconciled us by Christ's physical body.

Through death to present His holiness sight. He reconciled us making peace by His blood shed on the cross. This is the gospel.

Now if we are living within this knowledge of God's grace. We are living within the knowledge of God's grace. If we were enemies. Now we have been reconciled only by His grace.

Then how can we fail to be grieved for those who without God's grace stand as enemies and waiting His destruction.

[15:45] There is a deep need on our part. To daily and continually set our eyes on the gospel and Jesus Christ.

Because we are quick to forget the work that God has done and is doing in our lives. The gospel demands our affections.

And I think if we don't really get to this point. If we don't get this and we don't understand it. We are going to struggle with what Paul is doing here in the letter of Philippians. Because the Philippian church knew the gospel.

They had accepted the gospel. You read it. He is not trying to convince them of the basic tenets of the gospel. He is writing to spur them on in their loop of faith.

His heart is that their affection would be set on Christ. That love would abound more and more.

Take a look here.

[16:49] Chapter 1 verse 9. It is my prayer. Your love may abound more and more. Acknowledge and will discern me.

It is not enough. Saints. It is not enough just to know what the gospel is. You have to live it. You have to. It has to.

It demands your emotions. It demands your affections. And this I think should also be apparent in closing. That God's love may abound in us.
Let's pray.