

Paul's bonds

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[0 : 0 0] Can we turn together to consider this section of Philippians chapter 1, the section beginning at verse 12 down to the 20th verse.

And we've read it, but perhaps we can take our text from verse 18.

Now, in this section, for the very first time in the writing of this epistle, Paul brings us face to face with his own personal circumstances at this time.

Because you remember that in our introduction to the letter, you notice that this is one of Paul's prison epistles. It is a letter written to the children of God in Philippi from the prison house in Rome. And here, Paul is dealing with his situation. He wanted to go to Rome as a preacher.

He makes that evidence in the book of Acts. He wanted to get there. And yet, God's third adoration thought was for him. Yes, that he should go there as a prisoner.

[1 : 5 6] And tonight, we're going to look at Paul's rationale for his own circumstances. We're going to look at this rationale for the kind of opposition of his domain creatures. Stratus-based defined opposition. Some were wanting to add to his chain who are creatures of the gospel of Christ. We're going to look at a second rationale to these two types of preaching. And then we're going to look at his motivation for faithfulness to the gospel as he looks forward. First of all, we're going to look tonight at Paul's circumstances.

And I think you could, if you want to look at this arbitrarily, you could look at the three parts I'm going to have. Paul's chin, Paul's criticism, and Paul's care. His chin, his criticism, and his care. These three parts that come before us here.

First of all, we're going to look at Paul's circumstances. How do you think this man looks at his circumstances when he's no change in the prison house, in Rome, waiting for life or death, but whatever God might have for him. And the question is, when you notice about this, the rationale he makes of his circumstances here is this. He sees his situation as his bones in Christ. Bones in Christ.

Sufferings in Christ. That's where he looks at his circumstances. And if you would like to be like this great apostle, and if I would like this great apostle, you must look at all circumstances, whatever they are in this light, they are bones in Christ. That's where this man was. He found that his sufferings had to be linked to the head of the church.

The head of the church in heaven into Jesus Christ. That's where he looks at life. And he was talking about them and he's saying that there are his bones in Christ.

[4 : 3 2] They're his bones because he's related to the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, friends, there are times when following Christ, when he came to the eye of the storm, when following Jesus Christ, when he came to the eye of the storm, when he came to the eye of the storm. And he's saying that there are his bones in Christ.

Follow Jesus Christ. Follow Jesus Christ. Don't know that life will be easy. Whatever he does, just a bit of air is for you. Follow Jesus Christ at times. No one's bones and implicitly, no one's bones and implicitly, and circumstances that you don't want to have in your life. But what does it matter? If you can say that they are your bones in Christ, you know that you're united to them. And it doesn't matter if you've used bones or had life. It doesn't really matter what you have. If you have the Lord Jesus with you.

Somebody's words. Somebody wrote these words. Where Jesus is. Tears heaven and earth. And that's how the Lord's people find it. Even in the eye of the storm. If they know that all in our time is a mother of bread. If they have it with the fellowship of Jesus. And in living with Jesus. Then all is well. It doesn't matter.

And then secondly, I think we can say by the circumstances that he looked at them as a further opportunity to share the gospel of Christ. Listen to what he talks about them in these verses from 12 down.

He says, He says, I hope that you should understand, brethren, that these things that have happened to me have fallen out rather to the fervorance of the gospel. So that my daughters in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

[6 : 26] See, they've fallen out rather to the fervorance of the gospel. And as you begin with all. And yet, what time and then isn't I wasted time? My parents remember this. There's no circumstance in the life of a real believer.

The Lord to be seen that's wasted time. You know, I really sound myself first-grateful when I use a Christian that says, I'm God.

I'm God. I'm God. Just born a prisoner. He wasn't paid. He was very bad in prison in Rome. But do you know this? This man had a work to do for the Lord, even in prison. And what was he doing? He was doing this in the palace of there.

of the heaven bears, he saw his circumstances as a further opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with his fellow men. And I wonder if we look at life like that. Do you see things that tend to be wrong in your own life, things that you never want to have in your life as a further opportunity to share the gospel? My dear friend, remember this, wherever the wrath of God is, your wrath might be cast. Remember this, it can never be said that you made a mistake. God has a reason, and that reason is so often times this, that you might further share the gospel. You know, the sufferings of Christ and his friends in Christ, they were a cause for witnessing in the gospel for this man in Rome. And maybe you find out in your own lives, one by one of you, maybe you'd be able to say that the

Lord got me here. The Lord left me in the wilderness. Maybe your circumstances are in the most pleasant. Maybe you've lost me a thousand miles at all times from where you are. But my friend, remember this, it's God's way, it's spreading this gospel, just bringing you the way you are, in all the way that you might be of benefit to his fellow men and women in sharing with them the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, I think there was another reason that Paul saw behind that chain of his. You see what he says, by a reason of my chain, many of the brethren are made bold to speak the word without fear. Many of my brethren are made bold because I've been thrown into prison. I've been chained in prison, but it made others bolder to spread the gospel. And you know this?

[9 : 48] There are times when God can take his servants and can take his people out of the front line. And he can say to them, come in, come apart, and the rest are down. In order that he might make others of the brethren more bold to speak.

You know, how often in the life of the church, have you seen that happening? Communications that were just running on. It seemed quite happy. Things going on so, so smoothly.

And all that said that something happens, and one person with us, I wish him in the congregation can be taken away. One person with us, I wish him in the congregation, and the people of God can be moved somewhere else.

There's something else that's happened. And all of us, brethren, you see people in the church who didn't know of any talents. And they can't remember. Share their talents in the gospel.

And you know, my friends, just the word should be in the gospel of Christ. The weakness of one brother chained in a woman prison was the means of making others of the brethren bold to speak the word most fearlessly. And you know, friends, be willing to be chained and it's going to mean that one of your brethren is going to give expression to gifts that the Lord has given him in the gospel of Christ. Who knows that God could take some of his people in our fellowship into a situation, any of us, where others would have to stand in the preacher. You know this expression that Paul uses here, where he says that by reason of my chain, others have made me afraid to speak the word that I fear.

[11 : 44] I love it. Because it's shortly two things. It's shortly, first of all, that there's no one indispensable in the cause of Christ.

That's the first thing. There would be many, I'm sure, in the early church who would have thought, the church just couldn't go on without calling the apostle. And he lived in the house of the rest and room.

And yet God used that extremity of the church as the opportunity to throw others into the front line of service for him and to speak the word boldly without fear. It teaches me that no one is indispensable.

And it teaches me this also, that everyone in the cause of Christ and in the assembly of God's people have been given some gifts.

And all may God grant to each of us the vision whereby we will seem to be sanctioned properly in the cause of Christ.

[12 : 46] God spared us from saying, I can hold back, somebody else will do it. That's not the spirit of the gospel. The spirit of the gospel is surely whatever gifts, whatever abilities the Lord granted to me.

May I use them for the glory of God and for the extension of his cause in the world. God's Christian and all of them, Paul's rationale in relation to his circumstances, in relation to his chain.

This chain was in Christ. It was part of his union with Christ. This chain was of all the opportunity to spread the gospel. And this chain was totally an opportunity for others to develop their gifts and their talents in the cause of Christ.

But then Paul had to face another difficulty. And this other difficulty was many in the gospel who became his critics.

And we know that I have plenty of critics in the gospel. And some of them, know that I have sitting in this church tonight, that in every assembly, in every congregation of God's church, people who just had people who just had, you know, you know the way I have heard them described.

[14 : 06] There were the ones in the flock of Christ. They've got horns. And they're always showing their horns. And they're showing their horns particularly to those that are weaker in the cross than themselves.

And here was some in Philippi and around Philippi. And Paul knew about them. And there were men that loved to show their horns. They were always boxing. They were all coming up to someone, criticizing.

So, listen to the Lord, he identifies his critics. Some indeed preach Christ, all of them envy and strife. These men are preachers. These men are men who have been called into the ministry.

And yet they're motivated by the dual spirit of strife and envy. And then they all made God grant that we would never, as our body of life and the children of God, have that kind of motivation, the motivation of strife and envy.

Because it's a spirit that is hateful to God. And that our son, Paul says, who are preaching the gospel in this day. And that's the spirit that moves them. They're moved by strife. They don't rejoice with Paul in all that he's been able to do in the gospel of Christ.

[15 : 28] They don't rejoice, no. They're moved with that awful spirit of envy. You know, envy is, I think it's the cancer. The cancer that so often affects big, big areas of the Christian church and its witness.

The cancer of envy. The cancer of envy. And how often do you hear one of God's people who is confessing sin. How often do you hear one of God's children confessing to the sin of envy.

Look what envy does. Envy always breeds strife in the cause of Christ. That's what it does. All this, you know, there are twin graces in the life of the Lord's people. There's faithful repentance.

But you know that there are twin evils. Twin works of the flesh in the life of Christ too. And these twin evils are here. Strife coming along with envy. Envy will always bring strife in its wake.

That's something you've got to be always on your guard for in the cause of Christ. That you become only the years of any of God's children. Lest you might be one that so strife among his brethren.

[16 : 50] Do you remember what the wise man in the book of Proverbs says? There are seven things he says that are helpful in the eyes of God. That God needs. And he's talking about this and he's working out to a crescendo of the things that God needs.

And he reaches this, him that so strife among his brethren. And why is it so hurtful to God a man that so strife among his brethren? I'll tell you why.

Because so often that man is motivated by envy. And this is the identity of past critics. Men that are envious of him in the gospel.

Only God's spirit of congregation forever show the spirit of envy. Because it breeds strife. It breeds strife.

And there are others. Thank God there are others. There are others who preach the gospel and are motivated by the spirit of good will. Do you know, the spirit of good will is the spirit of heaven.

[17 : 57] Because I know you know that. I know that because the little angels came in from glory one day. And this is what they are to say. They are to say.

And to us, they are to say, Is born in the city of David our Saviour who is Christ the Lord. Glory to God in the highest. And on earth peace.

Good will toward men. Good will toward men. That's the angelic, the good angels. That's their message. And always you'll find that the gospel, if it's really preached in the spirit of the gospel, will be preached in the spirit of good will.

There will be no place for anybody there. It's good will. That's the spirit of God's messengers then. The spirit they should have. And then you see, Paul analyzes these critics of his.

Every preacher has had them. And this is what he says. They supposed to add affliction to my bones. They are wanting to add to my troubles.

[19 : 08] Every preacher of the gospel has troubles enough of his own without going out looking for them in the church of Christ. And there are people there in the church of Christ, and that's what they'll do.

Supporting to add affliction to the bones of Paul. Supporting to add to his troubles. Oh friends, what an awful spirit is brought in.

When the spirit of only gets a place in the church of God, in the assemblies of God's people. There are others you see. And they preach about them around.

Knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. Now Paul, you knew. You know there were many days when you did things that you ought not to have done.

There were days when you are burdened with the body of this death in your ministry. There were days when you are to call yourself a cab for the things that you did for the cause of Christ.

[20 : 12] And yet, you have brethren in the gospel who loved you. And the spirit they were of was this. They knew that you were set for the defense of the gospel.

And what does the spirit of love always do? Well, the spirit of envy always wants to heighten the failures of God's people. The spirit of love always wants to put a cloak over the failures of God's people.

And even a lotus man, Paul, had his failings. Those who preached the gospel with him in the spirit of love knew, one thing, that he was interested in the defense of the gospel.

They couldn't follow his reasoning and everything. They wouldn't agree with him and everything. But he had the interests of the gospel in his heart. And because he did, their love wanted to forgive.

Their love wanted to work with him. Their love wanted to cover his failings. Lovely spirit then, the spirit of love.

[21 : 22] And then you notice the reaction to both kinds of preachers in the heart of Paul. Whether in pretense or in truth Christ is preached. These people, they're with all their arrows pointing at Paul, those that are set in envy and in strife and the cause of Christ.

But they preach Christ. And that's the main thing. Everything else, my comforts, says Paul, my comfort is secondary.

There's only one thing really matters. And it's this, that Christ should be heralded first in the gospel. That's all. My comfort doesn't really matter. Supporting the asthma that's unattombed at me, with a gun's breathing at me.

As long as the gospel goes on. What does it matter? I rejoice with them. Because they're gospel preachers.

With all the feelings they have in them. They're preaching the gospel. And therefore, I rejoice you and I will rejoice. Do you notice how often this comes in to Paul's reasoning?

[22 : 35] I rejoice and I will rejoice. I sit on almost as though he's saying nothing is going to stand between me and the joy that I know because the gospel is preached.

But then he talks about his motivation for his own faithfulness. In the light of all these men that are moved by strife and envy, these men that are preaching the gospel but preaching it in the wrong spirit, he says, there are three assurances that I have and two determinations that I have.

And I'm going to deal tonight with these three assurances and these two determinations that Paul had. And the first assurance is this.

He is assured that the gospel, with all that it means for him, even his bands and his chains, that the gospel and everything else will work together for his salvation.

Notice right there in verse 19, For I know that this shall turn to my salvation. He knows that the difficulties of the Christian life, they've been sent there.

[23 : 52] And remember this, if you're beginning a Christian life, remember, the Lord doesn't promise that it's going to be easy for you to live for Christ. The Lord never says to you that your life is going to be a better reason if you're living out your life for Jesus.

No way. But he tells me this here, that he and we can have this assurance that if we're living for the gospel, it'll all work out for our salvation.

That's the great thing. It's all working out for our salvation. It's not a wonderful thing, you know, when you're having to face problems and difficulties.

When you're having to face loneliness in the life of grace. When you feel that the Lord's people are living in a different sort of plane to you and you're living at a different level from them.

And you feel it so lonely at times as a Christian. And you feel that the great strengths and stairs that the Lord has put in your way have been locked off one by one.

[25 : 05] It seems as though God is just coming down one by one of the strengths that you had. You know my friends what these threats are that are around you very often.

They're just means. They're shadows. That's what they are. They're means that God gave you, friendships that God gave you in the world even.

They're like when Michelangelo was doing one of his great frescoes in Rome. Apparently the date for the unveiling of this great Michelangelo fresco was given.

And on the day before that date people came to look at what was happening. And they said, what does all this mean?

There's no beauty in this. All said Michelangelo to them, wait till tomorrow. And all the struts and all the scaffolding will be taken away.

[26 : 23] And when they came the next day to see the fresco, everything was removed. And you know that's the way Christians are in the world. God puts a scaffolding and all the cloths around you while he's working at your life.

And preparing your life and polishing your life. But one day all of that will be taken away. And she shall be brought with gladness, grave and mirth on every side into the palace of the king.

And there she shall abide. She will go to the king in words with middle thought. Her fellow virgin's following shall unto him be brought.

Oh friends, isn't it lovely to think that the daughter of the king is all glorious within. Something like sound you see here. You see all the props and all the struts and all the scaffolding.

You see the earth as God's working out his beautiful plan in the lives of his people. But Paul had this assurance that the gospel and all it meant for him was for his salvation and for his beauty in his latter end.

[27 : 33] What a blessed hope that the people of God have. They had this assurance. Why shouldn't we therefore be motivated to faithfulness in Christ if we know that one day God's children are going to be all glorious within.

And then secondly, he had this assurance. He had the assurance of a place, a prayer of the Lord's people. Just as certainly as God had ordained the ends, the end of his final salvation, God had ordained the means.

And you know, one of the means that God has ordained for the blessing of his churches is that his people should be praying one for another. I maybe told you once before about a dear Christian man that I knew.

He was in his nineties. And I used to go to visit him. And nearly every day when I would be leaving his bed, which was his deathbed, he would say to me, Set me as a patch on your knee.

Set me as a patch on your knee. In other words, he was saying to me, remember to be praying for me. And you know, friends, that's a blessing that God's children have and it's part of the motivation they have and the assurance they have as they go on, that they've learned to pray one for another.

[29 : 04] Do you find yourself, you know, in your Christian life, do you find yourself going apart with God? Times without remembering a day maybe. Do you find yourself trying to pray?

And you find certain of the Lord's people pressed on your spirits on their own with it. And you can't but go with them to a throne of ghosts. What a ghost!

Oh, well, isn't it a tremendous blessing to know that we are in a great fellowship where we bring one another to a throne of grace.

Oh, friend, what a privilege it is to be praying one for another. You know, there are times when the oceans of this world can part us. But there's one thing that can't be broken when the oceans of this world part us.

It's the circle of prayer that circles the globe. It goes on night and day when God's churches are praying for one another. Oh, may that be whichever assembly we are.

[30 : 08] An assembly where God's people will have assurance that there's one of the Lord's people praying for them. And I know that there are some here tonight. And as I look out in this place, honestly before God, I know that there are times when I've had to turn aside and call on God and ask him to bless my souls.

And I know that there are times when you are at the throne of grace from me. What a circle that is! What a blessing that is!

Oh, my friends, feed that spirit! Don't let that spirit die in great life! Let us see to it that we men and women who are in the circle of prayer, cry out to God for his blessing one another.

That's part of what Congregational Fellowship really means. That we are taking each other to a throne of grace and we are going with one another to the place of prayer.

And the Father showed us love this. The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Oh, what an assurance! What an assurance! The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

[31 : 24] We heard a lot about this on the weekend. God's children are participants in the Spirit. That people have received the Spirit. Remember the way Paul speaks about this. He says, We have received not the Spirit of this world, but that Spirit which is from God whereby we know the things that are freely given to us of God.

May you know the Spirit as your leader in prayer. May you know the Spirit as your teacher in the world. May you know the Spirit as your guidance and direction in the days that lie ahead.

This was Paul's assurance. A place in the prayers of the Lord's people. And the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And the Gospel working for his salvation.

And what were his determinations? He said, there were three assurances. And there were two determinations. First of all, he's determined in nothing that he should be ashamed.

Determined that in nothing he should be ashamed. You know, the Apostle John, he's the Apostle of love. And he says one really beautiful thing at the end of the second chapter.

[32 : 38] He says this. Little children, he says, Abide in him in order that you might not be ashamed. That you might not shrink back in shame when he appears at his coming.

And Paul was determined of this one thing. That in nothing would he be ashamed. Oh, friend, as a Christian believer, see to it that in nothing you will be ashamed.

Now I know that there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus. I know that. But I also know that one star differeth from another star in glory.

And I know that reward is according to our works. And may we, by the grace of God, see to it that there will be nothing that will make us ashamed.

How do you mean, you're saying, how does the minister mean that we're going to be rewarded according to our works? Well, I believe that every Christian that will go to heaven will be absolutely full to overflowing.

[33 : 55] I believe that every one of them will have a fullness of Christ. And if you get there, and if I get there, we'll be happy and we'll be satisfied and we'll have everything.

Yes. But you know, if you were to go out with a mowed holy dish towel on a sunny day, and you were to hold it up to the sun, the larger holes would have more light flooding through them from the little holes.

And every hole would be full. And that's the way I've always thought of the reward that awaits the Christian. It's just our greater capacity to receive and enjoy the fullness of God.

Oh, may the Lord help us to seek real capacity and real fullness to enjoy Him for all eternity. That in nothing I might be ashamed.

That was His determination. And secondly, He is determined that in life or in death, Christ will be magnified in His body.

[35 : 06] No other thing. Do you know that Christ, that we would go to our death, and Christ not magnified in our body. Have you ever thought of those people who are mentioned in the letter to the Corinthians?

Many who were weak and sickly among them, and many who slept, because they had gone to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and they had eaten and drank, drunken, judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body.

They had gone to the sacrament. They had been obedient to that extent. But they were now weak and sickly, and there were some even slept.

They went to their death as a chastisement. They went to their death not magnifying the Lord in their body.

They went to their death under the chastening hand of God. But they went to their death. They got to glory. And it's almost as though these people got to glory by the skin of their teeth.

[36 : 12] They slept in Jesus. But oh, how different was the spirit of Paul that said that in everything, God would be magnified in His body.

Let's pray. Oh Lord, bless us tonight. Grant us grace that we might walk in Thy love, and keep Thy commandments, and seek to magnify Thee in our body and in our spirit, which is the Lord's.

Open our hearts, singing Thy praise for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.