

# **"Magnifying Jesus In Your Hour Of Trial"**

## **Philippians 1:12-18 January 23, 2019 – Jeff Lyle**

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An accurate study of the New Testament leaves us with the conclusion that dedicated followers of Jesus will endure many hardships. The world and the devil intentionally oppose the faithful Christian. In many parts of the world, violent persecution is the unavoidable reality for those who are not ashamed of Jesus. As the Apostle Paul continues his little letter to the Philippians, he does not hide the reality of his suffering. With great encouragement, however, his words redirect our focus off of the temporary struggle and towards the glory for Jesus that results when we steward our struggles in faith. What good do we allow to come from our own hour of trial? These words from Paul equip us to follow in his footsteps as he learned to steer his struggles toward the throne of Jesus. When we do the same, there will be a beam of glory that causes many to gaze upon the goodness of Jesus.

### **I. When Kingdom Perspective Owns You (12-13)**

#### **A. Eternal gains come from temporary losses (12b) – "...what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel..."**

Paul, in his own season of decrease and loss, seeks to reassure the believers at Philippi that he is actually encouraged about how God is harnessing this undesirable season in his life. He redirects their hearts to be encouraged that what the enemy meant for evil, God was using for good.

#### **B. Jesus becomes the headline in your suffering (13) – "...so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ."**

This is why Paul could rejoice so frequently in this letter to the Philippians. The message of Jesus was being discussed by believer and unbeliever alike in Rome. Paul was known as the one who had given up everything for this one named Jesus. His imprisonment was serving as a catalyst to Gospel conversations. Paul was suffering but the message was spreading. This brought deep satisfaction to him.

#### **C. You are not ashamed of your troubles (12a) – "I want you to know, brothers..."**

Paul was not ashamed of his chains. He saw his suffering as an honor because it was attached to Christ's ownership of Paul's life. It was not something that Paul hid in shame or tried to direct people's attention away from. He actually wanted them to know that he was

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suffering loss. Yet, above the reality of his loss, it was essential for them to understand how God was using the hour of his trial. We tend to diminish our suffering. We tend to isolate and disengage. We might hide behind little churchy clichés to redirect the focus off our troubles. Not Paul. Paul let it be as harsh as it was. Yet, in doing so, he intentionally made it about how his temporary affliction was serving to provide a greater weight of glory for Christ and the Gospel.

### **II. When Your Joy Eclipses Your Struggles (14-17)**

#### **A. Others are stirred and strengthened (14) – "And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."**

God does something powerful in the lives of other believers as they watch us steward painful seasons for His glory. It is counter to human instinct to rejoice in suffering. People expect us to cave and crumble when life's immense weightiness lands upon us. Paul communicated to the church at Philippi that, as those close to him in Rome witnessed his response to hardships, these Christians received an emboldening touch from God to be more confident and bold to advance the Gospel. Most of what comes off of our lives is contagious. Others spiritually breathe in what we breathe out. The fragrance of our lives can attach itself to others. Paul's joy eclipsed his struggles and became the primary scent that others picked-up on from his life. The result was that Paul's suffering served as an octane boost to the advance of the Gospel.

#### **B. You shed the victim mentality (15a, 17) – "Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry... The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment."**

Though it would have pierced his heart each time Paul became aware that some who called themselves Jesus-followers were exploiting his situation for their own gain, we do not find a trace of Paul becoming angry or bitter. He was able to factually state that some were intentionally trying to hurt him, yet he does not cry out for justice here. Remembering daily that his life no longer belonged to him, Paul was able to accept the persecution that came his way as being allowed by Jesus. Paul determined not to deepen the rivalry

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that others established against him. He intentionally called it what it was: envy, rivalry, selfishness, ambition and insincerity. Beautifully, there was no self-pity, abiding anger or defeatism. Paul kept the goal of Christ's glory every before his spiritual eyes. This prevented him from falling into a victim mentality.

**C. You grow in gratitude for loyal friends (15b - 16) "...but others from good will. 16 The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel."**

Paul took comfort out of the reality that he was fully understood and appreciated by many. While some preachers were seeking to step on Paul as they climbed toward some fleshly goal, others were united in heart with the Apostle. They understood that Paul's imprisonment was a gospel badge of honor, not a stigma from which they should disassociate themselves. Not everybody will understand you. Not everyone "gets us". How precious are those people who can grasp the preciousness of what God is doing in your life. It is rare that you will encounter someone who will stay by your side through the peaks and valleys that come your way as you walk out your devotion to Jesus. How blessed Paul was to know that there were some who remained loyal to him.

### **III. When You Discover Your Faith Is Real (18)**

**"What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice."**

This statement, which almost seems to come with a selfless shrug from Paul, should motivate all of us. After establishing that some in the Kingdom who professed to be Christians were intentionally attacking him, Paul literally asks, 'So what?' How could he respond in such a yielded manner? He retained his focus on the mission that had been assigned him, namely, the advance of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. He wisely discerned that God can (and does) utilize messengers who have corrupt motivations in ministry. Pastors, evangelists, missionaries and teachers will all give a full accounting to Jesus for why they did all that they did. In fact, Jesus prophesies in Matthew chapter 7 that many who preached His message will never even make it into the eternal Kingdom. Amazingly, God will allow unsaved or unsavory people to advance His message for the ages. People will be saved and strengthened under their ministries and by the very words they communicate. When a visible leader in the Church fails or falls, it does not mean that everything he or she

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taught was wrong. Paul chose not to lose sleep over the reality that some of those who opposed him had fallen motives which God could never endorse. As long as Jesus was exalted in what they proclaimed, Paul was able to lay his own reputation on the altar of God's glory. He trusted that the Lord Himself would settle it all in the end. Until we come to that place in our faith-journey that we are happy to lose our reputations for the glory of God, we cannot really know if our faith is real. When we lay down our own selves so that the name of Jesus is magnified, we can know that He truly lives within us.

**Few places in scripture reveal the father-heart of the Apostle Paul more so than the verses in this passage in Philippians. Though Paul could operate in some of the most stunning power from the Holy Spirit, he also understood the importance of nurturing those whom he spiritually fathered. From his words in Philippians 1:3-11, we learn the deep value of intentionally encouraging others in the walks with God. Paul tells the Philippians that they brought him joy. He let them know that he was praying for them. He reinforced that their hope in Jesus must remain strong as they look for deep growth in the love of God toward each other. Before he finishes his empowering words here, Paul reminds them all that the return of Jesus must remain at the forefront of their thinking. The aroma Paul releases in this encouraging passage is the fragrance of the Kingdom. May we all breathe it in deeply.**

### **I. Kingdom Hearts Are Intertwined with Others (7-8)**

**A. The church-planter was an intercessor (3-5) - "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."**

One might wonder how the Apostle Paul spent his free-time. From the various letters he wrote, we discover that intercession comprised a sizable portion of his life. While traveling in missionary journeys, raising funds for the poor, establishing churches, training leaders and writing letters, the Apostle frequently mentions a prayer life that motivates us all. When he prayed for the Philippian Christians, he testified that it brought him joy. He appreciated them. He did not forget how they had been faithful to help him from the day he first established a community of believers there. Paul was an amazingly powerful believer, but his strength did not undermine his loving fondness for the Philippian church.

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**B. The apostle was a prophet (6) - "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."**

Paul could never know how this one verse would embolden and encourage Christians down through the centuries. He tells his readers that God is not done with them yet! The invisible work of spiritual growth and sanctification continues as long as we are alive. Paul left no doubts about the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in their lives as he expressed his certainty that the same One who began their spiritual birth would continue to pour into them until their physical death. We need not despair of ever being forgotten or left incomplete by God. His plan has been enacted over our lives and He never misses a day of work on our behalf. Rest assured that the same God who initiated spiritual life in you is deepening it, enriching it, and purifying it today in you.

**C. The thinker was a feeler (7a) - "It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart..."**

May all of us who are hard-wired by God to think deeply and live with a tilt towards the objective, the analytical or the structural elements of the faith not fail to cultivate tender hearts of love toward others. Clearly, biblical truth is essential to the Christian life. Yet, in all of our theology, bible dissection and systematized doctrine, if we are not engaging our hearts with others, we are missing a massive component of the purpose in the gospel. Paul did not just know the Philippians' names, he felt deeply for all whom he knew. Kingdom undoubtedly leadership requires sharp minds. Perhaps more importantly, Kingdom leadership requires love. A sharp mind in the absence of love results in lots of action, but little progress. Paul grew in love as he interceded for the Philippians. The thinker was also a feeler as God imparted to Paul the heartbeat of His Son via the ministry of intercession.

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**D. The prisoner was a liberator (7b) - "...for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel."**

**Grace** - *the great equalizer in the Kingdom.* The same Gospel which anchored the Philippians' lives also anchored the life of the Apostle. Beautifully, Paul did not regard himself a superstar in the Church. He knew, as the chief of sinners, that he was only alive by the grace of God. The Philippians were equal partakers in that grace. They shared the same spiritual substance with Paul. Paul was suffering for his commitments to Christ as he wrote them from his incarceration in Rome. Yet, he did not feel abandoned in his isolation. He sensed that the church at Philippi were still loyal to him as he continued his defense and advance of the Gospel. Though Paul had lost his physical freedom, he could take great satisfaction that he was still being used of God to further set people free.

**E. The soldier was a lover (8) - "For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus."**

Not for the first time, Paul communicated his love and affection for them. It was no token sentiment that he felt for them. He yearned after them. Perhaps his absence from them had made his heart grow fonder. What is beautiful is that Paul's suffering and loss did not result in self-pity or bitterness. He did not make it all about him. Clearly in a more difficult circumstance than the Philippians, Paul still intentionally brought forth treasure to enrich them as he wrote this letter. Suffering and pain can adversely impact all of us. We must keep our hearts warm when the cold winds of pain blow against us. This stout believer was enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Yet, with all of the pain and loss, the soldier remained a tender lover of souls.

**II. Kingdom Understanding Matures with Time (9-10a)**

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### **A. Paul prayed for their love to grow (9a) - "And it is my prayer that your love {agape} may abound more and more..."**

Having exemplified his own deep love for them, Paul now moves into a call for them to love one another. He intentionally uses the Greek word for God's love - *agape*. This is a love that always seeks the highest good of the other person. His expectation is that they will pursue a near-volcanic level of love growth. We are not to be casual about our need to grow in love, for it is a primary attribute of Jesus Christ. He wanted all of the Philippian believers to continue to abound in the expression of their love for God and one another. None of us have tapped out the limits of love. As immeasurable as God's love is for us, that is how much we can continue to grow in our own love. Paul recognized this as being so essential for them (and us) that he made it a matter of regular prayer on their behalf. This emphasis forces us to ask concerning our own hearts, "How am I doing in the pursuit of growing in love for God and others?"

### **B. Paul prayed for their vision to sharpen (9b) - "...with knowledge and all discernment..."**

**Knowledge - big picture foundational. Discernment - specific, precise insight; skilled perception**

Paul also wanted them to deepen in their spiritual perception. They needed to mature in the skill of seeing things as God sees them. There were objective Kingdom matters concerning which they needed deeper knowledge. When they understood those matters, they also needed to discern what to do with the knowledge they had received. While Paul seems to mostly emphasize the heart in this passage of scripture, he did not bypass the call for them to develop sanctified minds. Christians who have no appetite for God's truth will not pursue knowledge. Eventually they will stagnate in their walk with God because there is no objective truth able to be accessed by them. We pursue truth to gain Kingdom knowledge. We want knowledge because it provides a foundation for discernment. All of these things lead to deepening wisdom which empowers us to be fruitful in God's Kingdom.

### **C. Paul prayed for them to hold to Kingdom values (10a) - "...so that you may approve what is excellent..."**

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Once knowledge and discernment are gained, we are able to clearly see the differences between what is bad, what is good and what is best. Paul's end-game desire for the Philippians is that they would commit themselves to those things which contain kingdom excellence. Life is full of distractions, and many Christians have fallen to giving the best of themselves to things that are less than excellent. Because we have limited resources, we are incredibly helped by discerning those things which are best and giving the bulk of ourselves to them. Doing an inventory of our lives from time to time is healthy. We must remain discerning concerning the excellent things - things worthy of devoting our precious resources.

### **III. Kingdom Commitment Comes with Rewards (10b-11)**

#### **A. What we retain (10b) - "...and so be pure {pure-hearted, sincere} and blameless..."**

When we live in a consistent manner that directs the best of our lives into the most excellent things, we will hold a to a pure-hearted direction. We will be blameless before God and people because He will be directing our paths towards that which is an accurate reflection of His own nature. While true Christians will inevitably encounter opposition, those who oppose us should have no ammunition that we hand them by living in ways that are inconsistent with the character of Jesus. Our testimonies to others are incredibly important. While we should never be controlled by what others think of us, we should certainly be concerned with the reflection we present as Jesus-followers. Paul understood that discerning Christian present the purest reflection of their Savior. He prayed that the Philippians would grow in this area.

#### **B. What we remember (10c) - "...for the day of Christ..."**

This is the event unto which we aim our lives. Jesus is returning to earth. He will judge our lives and evaluate the fruitfulness that came forth from what He has invested in us. The Day of Christ is the most monumental event in human history. God's son will return to earth and, after this, there is no possibility of altering anything we have done with our lives. Yes, we all are accountable, and King Jesus expects a hearty return on His investment. Paul frequently reminds His readers that our present-day actions and pursuits have an eternal impact. As a wise Kingdom leader, he was pointing us all toward that

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moment. How often (or infrequently) do we allow the return of Jesus to penetrate our day-to-day thinking? In the end, only those things done for the glory of Jesus will retain eternal value. The rest will be burned up. A commitment to keeping the return of Jesus front and center in our thinking will undeniably flavor our lives in such a way that we have great joy when we stand before Jesus. Do not waste your life on lesser things. Jesus has something far better for you between this moment and the day of his return.

### **C. What we reproduce (11a) - “...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ...”**

We are made righteous in our position at the very moment we trust in Jesus as Lord. The validity of our faith is seen, in part, by a practical righteousness that proceeds from the life of Jesus being at work within us. Paul prays for Christians' lives to be FILLED with the righteous fruit that comes from spiritual union with Jesus. We have a part to play in this process. We intentionally die to our flesh and the world. We intentionally commit to Jesus and His righteous ways. We do not flirt with sin. We do not choose disobedience over love. In the end, all human lives reproduce on the outside whatever is at work on the inside. For true believers, righteousness is the fruit of our faith.

### **D. What we relish (11b) - “...to the glory and praise of God.”**

This is what we long for - God to be glorified through our lives! We want our lives to render praise unto the One who loved us, sought us, saved us and shepherds us. At the end of the age, and throughout the everlasting age to come, the glory of God is the great anthem. Nobody struts sin eternity. There is no chest-thumping in glory. Jesus Christ is the radiant glory of the eternal city. He receives the praise, the honor and the worship. Because that is the reality in glory, we must embrace that priority in our lives now. So important was this that Paul interceded for it to be the ever-growing reality for the Philippians. May we also humble ourselves, call upon our great God and do whatever is required so that we may be used by Him for the glory of His Son all throughout our remaining days.

## **WELCOME TO MINISTRY**

**Paul describes his life in 2 Cor. 11:23-28**

**Constant and difficult work**

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Whipped and beaten more than he could count  
In prisons more frequently than any others  
Receiving the severest sentence from Jewish authorities: 39 lashes with the whip on five different occasions  
Beaten with rods three times  
Stoned to the point of dying  
Shipwrecked 3 times, spending a night and a day in the waters of the sea  
Constant traveling by foot while on land  
Enduring terrifying storms while at sea  
Under the constant threat of thieves  
Threatened and attacked by his fellow Jews  
Threatened and attacked by the Gentiles  
Dangers of the city  
Dangers of the barren desert  
Dangers among fake Christians  
A wearied and painful body  
Sleepless nights  
Voluntarily and involuntarily deprived of food  
Often without warm clothing or shelter  
The constant demands of all the churches he pioneered.