

011220 Growth Group Study

The Gospel Gains Ground



Background: After giving thanks and praying for his friends in the Philippian church, Paul seeks to update his koinonia partners on his well-being. But, in an unexpected twist, Paul doesn't speak to his well-being while in Roman chains. The apostle instead focuses on the fact that the gospel is gaining ground *in spite* of his circumstances. There are some around Paul that are gaining clarity as to the reason for his imprisonment (preaching the gospel of Jesus) and some others that are gaining confidence. For Paul himself, he's able to look beyond his hard circumstances and see the growth of the gospel, and this, for Paul, is a reason to rejoice! What an example we have to follow when our life circumstances are less than ideal!

Sermon Text: Phil 1:12-18 (ESV)

12 I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. 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.

15 Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, 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. 17 The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- a. As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
- b. What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- c. What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?

2. Sermon questions

- a. When you think of “joy,” what comes to mind, or how would you define the word “joy”? Is joy the same as happiness? Why or why not?
- b. Paul could disconnect his circumstances (being in jail) from his joy and contentment. Do you find it difficult for you to disconnect your life circumstances from your joy and contentment? Why or why not? What are practical ways to help make this disconnection (hint: Paul’s focus was elsewhere, onto Jesus and not on himself)?
- c. Looking forward to the new year, which of these two words would you like more of in your life: clarity (of the truth of the Gospel) or confidence (in knowing/sharing the Gospel)?
 1. If it’s clarity, begin praying this prayer: “Jesus, if you are the Christ, please bring me more clarity.”
 2. If it’s confidence, begin praying this prayer: “Jesus, give me wisdom and discernment so I might share the good news in my words and my actions to those you place in my path. May I find my confidence in you, the Initiator and Completer of all good things.”
- d. As Ryan shared a personal story of his complaints surrounding the PG&E power shutoffs, do you think you have a complaining spirit? Maybe ask someone close to you if they think you have a complaining spirit. ☺ What might be a way to resist a complaining spirit?
 1. Extra credit: Become aware of your complaints this week (maybe even keep a journal).