

## 1. It is Well to Participate in Each Others' Difficulties for the Gospel

- a. It was "well" that they shared with the apostles in their sufferings
- b. the indication is a participation, a fellowship in the troubles
  - i. Paul had trouble in Philippi, they asked him to leave the city when they discovered that they had beaten and unfairly imprisoned Roman citizens, but he and Silas did not have to go
    1. Interestingly, they gave up their rights to justly defend themselves and seek restitution for their unjust treatment
    2. Paul lived what he preached, he over-yielded
  - ii. He was forced to leave Thessalonica due to a threat on his life from a mob, to run away
  - iii. He write this letter to the Philippians from a prison in Rome, where his future may include being thrown to the beasts
- c. Participation is founded on one-mindedness in the Gospel
  - i. The Philippians showed a consistent loving commitment to think of the gospel growth throughout the world through Paul (1:5)
  - ii. They show a characteristic of searching him out (even when you had no opportunity, v10)
  - iii. They alone are the ones who supported them when they left Macedonia and are of the few benefactors of him now in Rome (along with Timothy, therefore Ephesus)
- d. The kind of support and sacrificial giving that the Philippians sent to Paul was an approval of his mission and a participation in his suffering
  - i. Their fellowship, though not face to face, was still fellowship
  - ii. This participation was an ownership of his mission and calling from the Lord that they, too, received from the Lord
  - iii. his "success" was theirs, too!
- e. What does this tell us about participation in the Kingdom?
  - i. First of all, are we doing well?
  - ii. Are we *remembering* believers who are proclaiming the gospel and are needing encouragement or resources in order to complete their goal?
  - iii. Do we seek the opportunity with zeal, perseverance, commitment?
    1. Are we pursuing each other to discover needs?
    2. Are we sending to help them, both in encouragement and in provision?
      - a. The Philippians looked for where Paul (and Silas, too) were in need and worked hard (Epaphroditus almost died!) to meet those needs, more than a few times
  - iv. Do we take ownership of the Kingdom call to the point where Kingdom workers' struggles become ours?
    1. This , of course, means prayer for each other in even our daily struggles to reach people with the hope of the gospel
    2. It also means the encouragement needed to continue to persevere in proclaiming the gospel and serving others with Christ-like loving truth-speak
    3. Finally, like here, it means that we are financially supporting those who proclaim the gospel in particularly hostile places and are gifted to do so

## 2. Participation Means Sincere Commitment and Promise-Keeping

- a. v15 - you all know that at the beginning of the gospel, when I came out of Macedonia, that no church partnered with me by giving me their word of giving or receiving except for you alone
  - i. this indicates that the Philippian church, from the beginning of their hope in Christ, had pledged ("given their word") to support Paul and the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world (which they did, according to 1:5, Rom 15:26, and 2 Cor 11:9)
    1. this promise, or pledge, showed the attitude of these Philippian brothers and sisters toward Christ, His gospel, and His apostle Paul
  - ii. Not only had they pledged their word, but they followed through *numerous times* and through great difficulty
- b. They, alone, had done so - they were special in that sense, *unique* in their dedication and commitment
  - i. the Philippians were extremely generous, supporting Paul numerous times while he was in Thessalonica (v16)
  - ii. He is emphasizing their **sincerity, commitment, and perseverance** to their word
    1. Thessalonica was the next major city that he went to after Philippi, indicating here by the word "even" that their promise was more than mere words, for they immediately helped him
    2. Not only that, but he came under such persecution at Thessalonica that he had to leave the city. That could have ashamed the Philippians (Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia), but they supported him and "sent" to him
  - iii. This giving was "according to my need"
    1. This indicates that not only were the Philippians generous or "hanging on loosely" with the resources of this world, but more importantly that they were *aware* of Paul's needs
      - a. Think about how difficult it is to keep up with the genuine needs of others today, even with cell phones and email and the global network
      - b. This was before texting and tweets, when communication was long awaiting and difficult to deliver
        - i. People had to carry letters over treacherous terrain and terrible weather
        - ii. In fact, the road from Rome to Philippi passed through the "
    2. The fact that they "sent" may have more to do with the person bringing financial help (Epaphroditus is a gift to Paul in this sense) than the monetary help itself
- c. Note also that Paul is speaking the blunt truth, not white-washing the lack of commitment of the other churches in the area

## 3. Remembering the King and His Workers is Evidence of Genuine Faith

- a. v17 - Not that I search for the gift, but I search for the fruit that increases into your account.
- b. not necessarily in an objective "balance sheet" kind of way, as if God were keeping score, but rather in a spoken praiseworthy kind of way
  - i. the word is literally "word", "into your word" and used similarly "to give an account" or "to tell one's side", "to answer for oneself"

- ii. This strong desire for the glory of Christ and the equipping of the apostle gives evidence of their faith in Jesus and love for His worker
- c. the idea here is that Paul sees the true value is not in the comforting of his needs but rather in the evidence of their faith that reveals the true nature of their concern: love for Jesus, concern for the growth of the gospel, and for Paul himself as a brother
  - i. We are not saved by good works, but good works (Christ-glorifying, Gospel-centered, Kingdom priority) DO reveal the true nature of one's faith
  - ii. "Talk is cheap"
  - iii. Their persistent, active, sacrificial remembering of the gospel and of Paul indicated that their faith was genuine and that Jesus is the King of their resources
    - 1. Stewardship view of resources
    - 2. Not an ownership view of resources

#### 4. Participating in God's Kingdom Begins with *Remembering* God's Gospel

- a. v18 - I have received all and I abound having been made full, having received from Epaphroditus the things from you, a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.
  - i. Paul indicates his fullness and the abundant sufficiency of their kind gifts by stating a kind of "receipt", more aptly stated "my receipt to you" (I received)
  - ii. Paul also makes a point to praise Epaphroditus completion of his mission (though he almost died in his efforts) and noting their source (the Philippians) in gratitude and recognition
- b. These gifts (plural) are viewed as a sacrifice, given not to Paul, but to God and are seen as acceptable, having been given out of proper motivation of love for Christ and others (Paul here)
  - i. For a sacrifice to be acceptable, it must be offered TO GOD in faith, love, and gratitude, not merely duty-bound or self-interested
  - ii. This shows that Philippians were primarily concerned for the glory of God through the proclamation of Jesus Christ and that Paul was that messenger of hope whom they loved
  - iii. This note of acceptance indicates that the Philippians, for all of their relational issue between each other, corporately were concerned for the gospel proclamation throughout the world and gave their resources to that end.
- c. In fact, this phrasing "sacrifice, pleasing aroma, etc." is almost word for word of that used of Christ in Ephesians 5:2
  - i. This corresponds strongly with Paul's previous admonition to "have the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus" in chapter 2
  - ii. Their material sacrifice is in-line with Christ's superior sacrifice, indicating their participation in his gospel (1:5) and their Christ-likeness
    - 1. This Christ-likeness is also fruit that grows out of the Vine
    - 2. **Love** for Christ and Paul; **Joyfully** giving to support Christ's glorious gospel (2 Cor 9:7); **Peace** that God will provide everything that they need so they can give theirs away for the Kingdom; **Patience** to wait on the Lord's provision; **Kindness** to remember and actively work to find and support Paul; **Goodness**, it is "well" they have participated in his sufferings; **Faithfulness** proven in their giving; **Gentleness**, they are limiting their power in order to build Paul's; **Self-Control**, they are learning to master their flesh's desire to build its own kingdom and instead are zealous to see God's Kingdom grow throughout the world
- d. This humble Christ-likeness is what Paul has been admonishing

- i. They are doing it in their relationship with him, they need to learn to live out the gospel with each other ☺
- ii. But he ends his letter with this praise-worthy (it is well) aspect of their congregation where they DO grasp the gospel and its beauty and are living out the implications through their zeal, remembrance, and active support

## 5. What Do We Do?

- a. Remember the gospel every day!
  - i. Spend time with Christ daily for we are so prone to forget His blessings or twist them to suit our self-centered hearts
  - ii. Preach the gospel to our situations
    - 1. Hope in Christ's blood and life when we are depressed
    - 2. Humility b/c of Christ's birth and cross and Lordship when we are overly confident in ourselves and thinking mostly of us
- b. Remember His workers every day!
  - i. Who do you know that is gifted by the Lord and taking His gospel out boldly and courageously to those who have not heard it?
  - ii. Do you know of those who are under opposition to the gospel and are weary, imprisoned, or persecuted? What are their needs?
  - iii. Contemplate how you can meet those needs!
- c. Participate in the Kingdom's growth by fellowshiping in the suffering of others
  - i. it is well to do so
  - ii. Find where our resources meet our brothers and sisters' needs in their proclamation of the gospel
    - 1. Club 36
    - 2. Pastors overseas who have lost business or been imprisoned and their families are left homeless or destitute

## Conclusion:

Paul states that "it is well" to remember the Lord's workers who are actively and effectively proclaiming the gospel to meet their needs. What the Philippian church did so well was that they considered the gospel worthy of their commitment, participation, resources, and their great efforts. We come out of a season where there is a lot of talk about giving and a lot of thinking about ourselves. The gospel teaches us to think about God's grace and His redemptive work in Christ and to think about His great redemptive plan for the world. It teaches us to forget about ourselves because we have more than we need because of Christ who was given to us.

May we take this reminder from a bunch of ragtag Philippians at the end of this year and learn to think outside of ourselves and remember those who are working hard to bring the gospel where it has never been heard. Remember them! Be one-minded with them! And may we set our minds and give our words to see them succeed in bringing many to faith in Christ and the freedom of sonship with God.

You may have noticed that there was not bulletin this week. When our copier went down we are left with two options: 1) go to an office supply store and pay someone to print them out, or 2) simply not have a bulletin this week. We decided, in the spirit of this week's passage, to forgo the bulletin and to send the money that we would have spent on it to Tyler Clemo in Norway. Tyler is still \$1,700 short of the funds that he needs to fly and serve in Columbia for the final two months of his mission. He is trusting the Lord, and he is in need. May we remember him today as a young man who is listening to the Lord and has followed His call to take the gospel to the unreached.