

PAUL'S REPORT FROM PRISON, PT. 1; PHIL. 1:12-13 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

IN PHIL. 1:12-26, ~ THE SECOND MAJOR SECTION OF THE LETTER, ~ WHICH WE'LL begin to look at today, ~ we have Paul's report from prison.

▶▶ He knows the Philippians are concerned for his welfare since he is their founding apostle, ~ so he provides them with a detailed update on his situation.

▶▶ And the noteworthy thing is that Paul focuses not on himself and his personal circumstances but on the gospel. ~ ~ Paul's situation came second in his eyes.

▷▷ It took a back seat to proclaiming the good news that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures," as Paul says in 1 Cor. 15.

THIS MORNING, ~ WE'LL COVER VERSES 12-13. ~ ~ READ

▶▶ The main thing being conveyed in these two verses is: ~ ~ persecution actually serves to advance the gospel.

BUT BEFORE WE DISCUSS THAT, ~ WE'LL MAKE TWO OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SOME other things going on in these two verses.

1st, ~ PAUL SAYS, ~ "I WANT YOU TO KNOW, BROTHERS." ~ ~ WHY? ~ ~ Couple suggestions.

▶▶ Perhaps Paul wants them to know these things that he's about to tell them to encourage them and to ease their concern for him, ~ because contrary to appearances, ~ the gospel was advancing.

▶▶ And definitely, ~ I would say as a further suggestion, ~ he wants them to know these things in order to show them that God is sovereign over the affairs of this world, ~ ↴ ↴

▷▷ as evidenced in the fact that persecution of His people cannot stop Him from advancing the gospel.

▶▶ Recall from Eph. 3:1a, ~ that Paul referred to himself as "the prisoner of Christ Jesus."

▷▷ Paul considered himself Christ's prisoner ~ not Caesar's. ~ ~ Only looked like

▷▷ By saying "I, ~ Paul, ~ the prisoner of Christ Jesus," ~ Paul was declaring the absolute sovereignty of Jesus over history and all of life. ↴ ↴ 1/6

▶▶ This point is seen in the believers' prayer recorded in [Acts 4:23-31](#).

▷▷ They address God as, ~ & rightly so, ~ "Sovereign Lord" and say in [verses 27-28](#), ~ ¶¶

↳↳ "for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, ~ whom you anointed, ~ both Herod and Pontius Pilate, ~ along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ~ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."

▷▷ Crucifixion

↳↳ Judas not in control ~~ Jews not ~~ Romans not ~~ Satan not ~~ It only looked that way.

→→ God in control, ~ & everything proceeded according to His sovereign plan.

▶▶ Our God is sovereign over all of history ~ and all of life.

▷▷ Nebuchadnezzar

↳↳ [Dan. 4:27-30](#), ~ [34-37](#)

▶▶ And from this fact, ~ we can zoom out and rest assured and be encouraged that God's overall plan of the ages will come to fruition . . . ~ no matter what Satan and the world do.

▷▷ [Ps. 2](#)

▷▷ The scene depicted in [Rev. 11:15](#) will come about.

↳↳ "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.'"

▶▶ This is encouragement for us today, ~ in light of current events.

▷▷ God will bring His plan for the ages to completion

▷▷ When we view what's happening in the world today, ~ know this: ~~ ¶¶

↳↳ things are not spinning out of control, ~ evil and chaos will not be triumphant.

→→ No matter how much Satan and this evil world ¶¶ 2/6

▷▷ When we view current events, ~ there is no need to become fearful, ~ depressed, ~ or angry.

↳↳ Rather, ~ should we not have a similar response to God's initial response to puny man's puny efforts to overthrow Him? ~~ "He who sits in the heavens laughs."

▷▷ My fellow believers, ~ no matter what Satan and this evil world do, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ "the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed."

→→ And there will be "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

▶▶ God is sovereign over all of history and all of life, ~ nothing is out of His control.

▶▶ And think about this as we ponder these things my brothers and sisters in Christ.

▷▷ The way we respond to current events speaks volumes about our belief in the sovereignty of God.

THE SECOND OBSERVATION BEFORE DISCUSSING THE MAIN THING IN VERSES 12-13 is this: ~~ Paul says, ~ "my imprisonment is for Christ."

▶▶ Paul was not in prison because he was a criminal. ~~ He was not a political prisoner

▷▷ He was in prison simply because he was a servant of and preached about Jesus.

▷▷ Well, ~ that doesn't seem right or fair.

▷▷ But that is exactly what Jesus told us to expect, ~ hatred from the world and persecution.

↳↳ Jn. 15:18-21 ~~ Jn. 16:33

▷▷ Peter, ~ present when Jesus spoke those words says this in 1 Pet. 4:12, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."

▷▷ John, ~ also present at the time Jesus spoke, ~ reinforces Peter's point. ~~ 1 Jn. 3:13.

↳↳ "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you." ¶¶ 3/6

▶▶ Now, ~ we're going to come back to this and talk about it more in depth when we get to Phil. 1:29. ~~ So I won't say anything more about it now.

▷▷ Let what we have said about it this morning get us thinking in these terms

OK, ~ LET'S TURN ATTENTION TO MAIN THING BEING CONVEYED IN VV. 12-13.

AND THAT IS, ~ PERSECUTION ACTUALLY SERVES TO ADVANCE THE GOSPEL.

▶▶ That is the exact opposite of the intended effect on the part of our persecutors

▶▶ Part of the problem for them is they think they're going up against some man-made invention, ~ which is dependent on human beings for its advancement.

▶▶ In reality they're going up against God.

▷▷ The gospel originated with Him, ~ and is dependent on Him for its advancement.

▷▷ Jesus said, ~ "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

▷▷ And the gospel is "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

▷▷ In Colossians, ~ Paul speaks of the gospel as "bearing fruit and increasing."

▷▷ The advice of Gamaliel to the other Pharisees is instructive here. ~~ Acts 5:38-39a.

↳↳ "38 So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; ~~ 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. ~~ You might even be found opposing God!"

▶▶ Pers. advances the gospel. ~~ Paul saw this even before he was saved. ~~ Acts 7:58-8:8 .

▶▶ And now, ~ Paul, ~ the servant of Christ Jesus, ~ was living it. ~~ I want you to know

▶▶ 2 Tim. 2:8-9, ~ "8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. ~~ ¶

▷▷ But the word of God is not bound!"

→→ The word of God cannot be chained. ~~ Gospel not imprisoned.

↳↳ Can silence believers but not power of word ~~ Bury workers

▶▶ Be encouraged my fellow believers, ~ no matter how hostile the culture around us gets, ~ they will not stop the spread of the gospel.

▷▷ And that's the most important thing

▶▶ Satan and the world

▷▷ The gospel will continue to spread until the day God brings the curtain down on human history and Jesus sets up His eternal kingdom. ~~ The battle is not done

▶▶ I want you to know my dear brothers and sisters, ~ Paul declares, ~ that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News about Jesus Christ.

▷▷ Satan and the world meant it for evil, ~ but God meant it for good

ONE AREA IN WHICH THE GOSPEL ADVANCED was right in Paul's backyard, ~ so to speak.

▶▶ Verse 13, ~ "so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ."

▷▷ Implication: Witnessing to everyone w/in earshot. ~~ Also, ~ shows Paul was not complaining

▶▶ Paul's reference to the imperial guard points to the most elite group of 9,000 Roman soldiers, ~ who served as a special bodyguard for Caesar.

▷▷ And it was the imperial guard that was tasked with guarding Paul by an attached chain.

▶▶ Hard to tell what Paul meant by "all the rest." ~~ Clearly other unbelievers apart from . . .

▶▶ Those who guarded Paul and the others probably started by asking Paul why he was in chains.

▷▷ Now, ~ this is pure conjecture, ~ but the following is not far-fetched.

↳↳ Paul may have answered like this: ~ "I'm glad you asked. ~~ I am in chains because I belong to and preach Christ. ~~ And let me tell you about Him."

▶▶ We just don't know how many of these unbelievers were saved.

▷▷ But we do know that some believed, ~ because Paul closes this letter saying, ~ "All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household." ↓↓ 5/6

▶▶ Think about it. ~~ Paul's imprisonment brought the gospel to the very heart of secular political power in Rome.

▷▷ Do you think God could do that today?

↪↪ The universe hasn't blown apart, ~ so I think it's safe to assume that God is still on His throne

GOD WANTED THE GOSPEL BROUGHT TO THE VERY HEART OF SECULAR POLITICAL power in Rome.

▶▶ Wanted the guard and the others to hear the gospel.

▶▶ No accident

▷▷ Divine providence

▷▷ Esther

▷▷ Joseph ~ ~ Ps. 105:16-24

▶▶ Our awesome God is superintending events, ~ all events good and bad, ~ in our lives and in the universe to work together for our good and to fulfill His purposes, ~ **and ultimately to bring Him glory.**

CONCLUSION.

IN CLOSING, ~ I'LL LEAVE YOU WITH THIS THOUGHT.

▶▶ Paul's situation and the advancement of the gospel within it illustrates how Christ can erect a pulpit for Himself and put a voice for the gospel in it in the very camp of the enemy.

▷▷ So be encouraged.

LET'S PRAY 6/6