

Imagine that Rich and Nancy Carroll went on a mission trip to a closed country, and upon arriving they were sequestered, questioned, and jailed for espionage (all unjust accusations, of course). How would you feel? What if you hadn't heard from them in a month, 3 months, 6 months? Would you be concerned for their welfare? Absolutely! This is the position that the Philippians find themselves in. Their pastor/brother has been imprisoned and taken to Rome awaiting the verdict for his life or his death (the trial has already taken place). They are concerned for him, wondering about him, and their eyes have slowly shifted away from the big picture to the lesser because of their legitimate love of their pastor.

But, Paul, in one deft sentence, brings their eyes back to see the bigger picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He doesn't deny his terrible circumstances, but his focus is on the greater good: the advancement of the gospel. "Get your eyes on the ball, Philippians! There is much to rejoice about, for the gospel is advancing where it has never gone, and Christ is being glorified in my chains." This is the gentle hand of redirection that the Holy Spirit has given in order to strengthen and grow His Church to the glory of God. There are things that we need to know in such times of suffering and of loss. Primarily, the truth that the advancement of the gospel is greater than all human freedom.

1. It is Important to Know That the Advancing of the Gospel is Greater Than All My Human Freedom
 - a. Paul states emphatically that the Philippians are "to know" what he writes
 - i. Places the infinitive at the beginning of the sentence
 - ii. Knowledge and understanding of the situation are what was needed
 1. Reminder of the eternal, of what's important
 2. Acknowledgement of his true situation
 - b. He has lost his human freedom
 - i. Paul is in chains in Rome awaiting the verdict of treason against Rome
 - ii. "the things against him" is the literal translation of "what has happened to me"
 1. Against: hardship, animosity, obstacles
 2. Things: plural, numerous, many
 3. Unjust arrest, imprisoned, in Rome, loneliness, sicknesses, etc.
 - c. This loss of human freedom and its attached consequences have produced greater advancement of the gospel
 - i. "rather": contrasting comparative, "it's not loss, it is actually gain!"
 1. shows us that the initial assumption by the Philippians was that Paul's arrest and consequent sufferings were to be lamented and were a cause of the loss of joy
 2. Also shows us that to Paul it was greater that the gospel was being advanced into places that it might not have been apart from his suffering
 - ii. "happened" is from the word "brought" or "came"
 1. Passive in idea, indicating that these sufferings were brought to him by another
 2. Who is the other?
 - a. Joseph: "what you meant for evil, God intended for good"
 - i. His accusers are responsible, but God is in control
 - b. Paul sees his sufferings as "sharing in the afflictions of Jesus" (3:10)
 3. This word is also emphatic in the sentence, indicating that this bringing of loss of human freedom was important to understand
 - a. God is in control of this, it is His plan to advance the gospel
 - b. There is no need to fear with loss in this world, any loss, for God is at work to produce the greater good: the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - iii. The greater comparative to his suffering is that the gospel is advancing
 1. The Gospel is something that advances and grows
 - a. Col 1:6

1. Fellowship in the gospel (1:5)
 2. Confirmation of the gospel (1:7)
 3. Advancement of the gospel (1:12)
 4. Defense of the gospel (1:16)
 5. Live worthy of the gospel (1:27)
 6. Striving for the faith of the gospel (1:27)
 7. Timothy served him in the gospel (2:22)
 8. Help these women who shared in the struggle for the gospel (4:3)
 9. Preaching the gospel at the beginning (4:15)
- ii. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the point for Paul, not his freedom or comfort, his earthly blessings or joy
1. The Philippians were assuming that Paul would be depressed because he was imprisoned and kept off “the mission field”
 2. But the GOSPEL IS UNSTOPPABLE BY MAN
 3. Paul will boast about Jesus wherever he may be, in whatever circumstances that he might find himself, because his greatest love is Jesus!
 - a. It would be so easy to be concerned about himself. I usually am concerned about myself, but Paul is concerned about the good news of the glory of Jesus Christ.
- iii. What is the Gospel?
1. There is a danger of telling half-gospel when we speak to others:
 - a. It is not merely enough to tell people the *benefits* of the gospel
 - b. Neither is it enough to tell others the results of *rejecting* the gospel
 2. The Gospel (Good News) is the historical event of Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension to glory AND the interpretation of what God’s Word says that these things mean
 - a. Alistair Begg: “Jesus died” (historical event) “for our sins” (biblical interpretation)
 - b. So that the gospel is news of the historical event that God has planned and brought about in Christ and the implications and biblical reasons for it
- iv. The advancement of this proclamation of God’s salvific plan and purpose to bring Himself glory through the salvation of men through the life, death, and resurrected Lord Jesus is what brings Paul great joy (18).

3. Suffering in Christ Advances the Gospel Through Increased Proclaiming

- a. The suffering and faith-filled gospel-overflowing imprisonment of Paul actually encouraged other believers to preach the gospel
 - i. They were “persuaded” by Paul’s chains to preach boldly
 - ii. They gained courage through hearing of Paul’s joy in the advancement of the gospel
- b. They “spoke the Word of God”
 - i. The Word of God is not merely living the life of Christ in deeds and action
 1. We have been convinced by our society that it is better to be seen than heard
 2. While there is some truth in this (preaching hypocritically is condemned in Scripture), there is also a great deal of error
 - a. Living without proclaiming the historical event of the gospel and its biblical interpretation saves nobody

- b. Apart from this, the gospel is the point! The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is the shining forth of the knowledge of God (2 Cor 4:6)
 - ii. What was it in these brothers that made them lack courage to speak the word of God?
 - 1. Shame of Christ's sufferings
 - 2. The offense of the Cross
 - 3. The high cost of discipleship
 - c. The Advance of the Gospel is Also Increased Proclamation by Believers
 - i. In this, Paul rejoices!
 - 1. Even when the motivation for the preaching is bad (15-18)
 - 2. If the content is Gospel, then he rejoices!
4. How Do We Do This?
- a. It is important for us TO KNOW: Get your head in the eternal!
 - i. The advance of the gospel is goal!
 - ii. The glory of Christ is our purpose
 - iii. The Kingdom of God is our proclamation
 - b. Is the advancement of the gospel our joy?
 - i. in the increased hearing of the gospel by unbelievers
 - ii. in the increased proclaiming of the gospel by believers
 - c. Are we speaking the whole gospel?
 - i. Why or why not?
 - ii. What do we ignore or cut out of the gospel because it's uncomfortable or offensive to our culture?
 - d. How do we rejoice like Paul, living and breathing the advance of the gospel?
 - i. Fix your eyes upon Jesus
 - ii. Depend on and walk by the Spirit
 - iii. Trust in the sovereign promises of the Father
 - iv. Bathe your mind, soul, and spirit in the gospel
 - 1. The historic event in which we trust
 - a. My sins are so great that Jesus had to die (repentance)
 - b. Jesus loves me so much that He did die to redeem me and make me a child of God (faith)
 - 2. The historic and living Savior in whom we depend
 - a. Read His Word
 - b. Meditate on His promises
 - c. Pray to understand and to seize His Word with our hearts
 - d. Contemplate how we are to live in the light of His glorious grace
 - e. Whatever happens to you or to me, order your life both individually and corporately according to the gospel (v27)

Conclusion:

Can you imagine what this church will look like when our eyes are fixed upon the glory of Jesus Christ? Can you imagine the transforming power of the gospel, which is the power of salvation to those who believe, sweeping through this city? Can you imagine the praises of Christ being sung without fear and with great fervor and intention and joy? Oh, what a day that lies just around the corner. The Spirit of God is upon us, ready to break forth in powerful revival in this city: let the gospel advance at all costs to the glory of Jesus Christ.