



Philippians

Living in the Joy of Knowing Christ!

The Joy of Knowing His Ways!

Philippians 1:12-18

Message #3 of 16 – S987

Sermon given on March 6, 2022



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The Joy of Knowing His Ways!

Philippians 1:12-18

Opening Comments

- Turn to **Philippians 1**
- Today, we continue our series through the book of **Philippians – Living in the Joy of Knowing Christ!**
- I am convinced that God is actively involved in the things of my life and yours
- And it is not unusual that I do not understand what God is doing or why He is doing it the way He is
- The Bible explains why that is true **Isaiah 55:8-9**
“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. 9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”
- And that is well and good when you are well, and things are good
- But what do you do with those things when you are not well, and things are not good?
- How do we make sense of life when things don’t make sense in your life?
- Philippians is a letter that the apostle Paul wrote to the church he founded in Macedonia
- Life was harder for Paul after he became a believer, but he came to know joy even in the midst of hard things
- You can read about what he went through in 2 Corinthians 11
- And here he is chained to a Roman soldier writing a letter that has a strong tone of joy throughout
- Paul is going to tell us in our text for today that God’s way of doing things is the right way even when we don’t understand it – even when it makes our life harder
- And knowing that is true, Paul was able to rejoice
- Let’s pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us rejoice in what God is doing
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **The Joy of Knowing His Ways!**
- One of the reasons Paul wrote this letter was to respond to the concern that the Philippians had for Paul's safety
- Paul's future was uncertain, and they loved him
- Paul changes their focus
- **Philippians 1:12**
- Paul's focus was not on himself, his comfort, his safety
- Paul's focus was on the furtherance of the gospel
- That was why the Philippians cared about Paul – he had brought the gospel to them, they believed – they were the fruit of Paul's focus of the 'furtherance of the gospel'
- To understand Paul, we must understand that the gospel was the main thing - the only thing.
- Everything else in life was to be secondary to the proclaiming of the truth of the gospel, including his own comfort and security.
- To Paul, life meant furthering the gospel of Jesus Christ
- He will say that very thing in our text for next week **Philippians 1:21-22a**

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor...

- A few years before Paul wrote this letter, Paul was busy serving Christ
- He had been ministering to the churches he had helped start in Asia Minor
- When those churches discovered the church in Jerusalem was suffering, they prepared a generous gift to help support them
- Paul was one of the men tasked with carrying the gift to them
- The elders in Jerusalem welcomed him and rejoiced in the gift
- Paul had a chance to share all the good God had done through Paul's ministry and the church in Jerusalem rejoiced in that too
- Life was good – but then, Paul is falsely accused by the Jews – arrested by the Romans – barely escapes an assassination attempt – and is forced to appeal to Caesar to keep from being handed over to the Jews who were trying to kill him
- And then he is on a ship headed to Rome

- What will happen to his ministry of furthering the gospel?
 - It kept going
 - God's ways are not our ways! God's ways are the way to good!
 - First –**God's Ways are Good for the Lost**
 - **Philippians 1:13**
 - Paul was not locked up in some dark, dank, lonely prison cell
 - It was more like house arrest **Acts 28:16**
- Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.**
- Except rather than a monitor around his ankle was a chain attached to a Roman soldier
 - Try to imagine that – every shift change brought someone new for Paul to share the gospel with
 - Paul was allowed to have visitors – those guards experienced the love of Christ shared between believers
 - These were not just any guards – they were palace guards
 - These are the guards who guarded Caesar's palace
 - And they were getting saved – Paul ends this letter with **Philippians 4:22**
- All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.**
- The Philippians didn't understand what God was doing when He allowed Paul to be arrested and sent to Rome
 - From a human perspective Paul's life and ministry were over
 - God's ways are not our ways!
 - It is unlikely that Paul would ever have an opportunity to share the gospel with as many of the guard as he did by being chained to them night and day
 - If you are anything like me, your life has not gone the way you planned it
 - I wanted to be an oceanographer when I grew up - Kelly – a veterinarian
 - Our lives often take unexpected turns
 - Our plans are disrupted or blocked by things outside of our control
 - This is true whether you are a believer in Christ or not

- But it is faith that tells us that is not a bad thing **Proverbs 16:9**
A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.
- I never imagined I would be standing here sharing God's Word
- Until I had my own Damascus Road experience with Christ – though mine was somewhere near Fresno and not nearly as dramatic
- The course of my life changed, and God has used my life to bring the gospel to people I would never have encountered otherwise
- The same is true for all of us – rarely does someone end up where they thought they would
- It is not a mistake – it is not a failure on your part – it is not God punishing you – it is not the world conspiring to ruin your life
- It is God's sovereign will determining the path of your life for His glory and for the good of others, including you
- Second – **God's Ways are Good for Believers**
- **Philippians 1:14**
- If we had our way, life would be easy, prosperous, and filled with happiness
- We would be surrounded by people we loved and who love us – with no drama or conflict
- For Kelly it would also include lots of critters and chocolate
- And we imagine that if my life were easy, that would make it better for everyone around me – I would be able to do more for them
- Paul was under house arrest chained to a Roman guard – he was not free to do what he wanted
- His chains inspired others around him to be confident and bold in their proclamation of the gospel message
- Paul's focus was the gospel message – not his comfort or freedom
- Rather than wallowing in the misery of his circumstances, Paul took every opportunity to share the gospel with his guards and to encourage the believers he was able to stay in contact with
- There were many believers in Rome – it was to them that Paul wrote the book of Romans a few years earlier
- As word spread that the great Apostle Paul had been put into prison, many men would have responded to the call of God to continue his work even if they didn't feel they compared to Paul.

- Watching another believer go through difficult times with joy because of their faith has a positive and purifying effect upon other believers.
- Not only did God's ways revealed through Paul's life encourage them to confidence and boldness – it also revealed their character
- Third – **God's Ways reveals the Heart**
- **Philippians 1:15-17**
- It was not unusual for Paul to have people who resisted his ministry
- The group most commonly mentioned were the Judaizers – they preached that you had to become a Jew and believe in Jesus to be saved
- Paul referred to that as a false gospel – not the true gospel that saves
- That is not who Paul is referring to here
- Paul is addressing the motives for preaching
- Some are preaching from love – others from envy and selfish ambition
- They are still preaching the gospel – people are getting saved from the preaching of both
- God's ways are not our ways
- And when God's ways don't line up with our ways – our hearts are tested – our faith is challenged – our motives are revealed
- And that is good because we don't know the state of our own heart, let alone that of other people **Jeremiah 17:9-10**

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

- One of God's ways is to put us in situations where the reality of heart is revealed
- For example, how do you know if there is fear in your heart? **1 John 4:18**

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

- God's desire for us is that we would be fearless in faith
- Most fear is a problem of faith
- So, God puts us into a place that stirs up the fear in us
- He is not trying to make us afraid – He is trying to show us something that is standing in the way of us being more like Christ
- The problem is that sometimes we can't see what God is doing

- That's why we need to be in true fellowship and community with other believers
- Paul could see that some were preaching with a motivation of love – others – envy and selfish ambition
- Do you think the ones who were preaching out of envy believed that was the motivation of their preaching? Probably not!
- We need each other – come to church regularly – get into one of the Bible studies – get involved in serving in the church – connect
- The more connected you are to the body, the easier it will be for you to see what God is doing when what He is doing is not what you expected Him to do
- You might expect Paul to be offended by the preaching of those with wrong motives
- **Philippians 1:18**
- Paul wanted only one thing in life – that the gospel would go forth to the whole world. Everything else in his life was secondary.
- All of Paul's needs, wants, dreams, desires, and wishes were consumed by his desire to proclaim the gospel to anyone God would put in front of him.
- This is the kind of faith that can change the world. It did!
- What matters to you more than the gospel? What matters to you more than one more person hearing the gospel message?
- God's ways are not our ways – but His ways are good, right, holy
- His ways are leading each us to a deeper faith
- That faith is meant to encourage other believers
- His ways are positioning us where we can share the gospel with someone God loves as much as He loves us
- If you will make the gospel the main thing, then you may not like or understand what God is doing, but, like Paul, you will be able to rejoice that He is doing it through you
- **Pray**