



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Philippians Lesson 5: Philippians 1:12-25

As you can tell from our first lesson in the text last week, Paul doesn't waste any time at all encouraging the brethren in Philippi to shift their focus. I mentioned in last week's lesson that Paul is going to give us several extremely practical ways to deal with the conflict that can arise between brothers and sisters in Christ. The first of these practical ways is to observe examples of godly behavior and focus and try to emulate these people. Paul will give four examples of those whose behavior is worth imitating, the first of which is himself.

Read Philippians 1:12-14

What circumstances is Paul referring to in verse 12?

What two reasons did Paul mention for his thankfulness?

Talk about perspective! Paul could have been upset to be in prison. He could have at least been sad and longing to escape. From an earthly perspective his circumstances were bleak. If he were looking at things the way the rest of the world did, he would have

had every right to be frustrated, angry, and discouraged.

Paul probably wouldn't have chosen the situation he was in, but once he was there, he was always searching for any way he could to promote God's will. Because of this he was even able to preach to the Pretorian Guard! The Pretorian Guard were the guards stationed in the Imperial Palace where the emperor lived. These were important men and some of the most influential soldiers in the entire Roman military. Not only would these men have had connections with other soldiers throughout Rome, but it is also possible they would have had connections to the Roman leaders of the day as well. This stay in prison opened up a massive door for the gospel to be spread.

Not only that, but Paul's example encouraged the rest of the brethren to be bold and teach God's word even with the threat of persecution or prison. If Paul could do it, so could they! It is a fact of life that we are not always in control of the situations we find ourselves in. There are times we are stuck somewhere that we did not plan, but, just like Paul, we are expected to make the most of every situation placed before us. Every challenge we face can be used to further the kingdom of God in one way or another.



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What are some of the challenges that you have faced that have actually served to further God's plan even though the circumstance were less than ideal for you from a worldly perspective?

How have you seen others embody this same attitude that Paul shares?

How can focusing on God's plan in the midst of unfavorable circumstances help our relationships with others?

Read Philippians 1:15-18

What two types of people proclaiming Christ does Paul describe in verse 15?

What motivation does Paul ascribe to those preaching from envy and strife?

What motivation does Paul ascribe to those preaching from good will?

According to verse 18, what is Paul's perspective about both groups?

Wow! Talk about a humbling passage! Paul could care less about people trying to hurt his feelings or seeking to cause him distress. All he cares about is if Christ is proclaimed. Notice, he isn't simply tolerating this, and he isn't just okay with it. He is rejoicing! He is rejoicing because ultimately his hurt feelings don't matter, the only thing that matters to him is the progression of the gospel of Christ.

We often get so focused on the way we want things to play out that we forget our will is not what matters at all. In fact, sometimes, even in our service to God, our selfishness shines through. "I can't believe Sally Sue is allowed to do that job; don't the elders know she just wants the attention?" "I've been helping with this project for 17 years, what would make them think that lady can step in and even attempt to do all that I do?" "Can you believe she just started attending and already thinks she runs the show and can help organize the fellowship meal?" The list could go on and on...but at the heart of it all is selfishness. When we decide that our hurt pride should be the



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focus, we are actively taking focus away from the job at hand: serving God with all of our heart.

If we encounter a situation that has our hackles up, our first response should never be to lash out. Our first response should be to ask ourselves this very powerful question: Is God's will proclaimed? And if the answer is yes, then like Paul, we have no other godly option than to rejoice.

Why is it so hard to maintain this mindset when working in the body of Christ?

What are some ways you have seen the selfishness of the world creep into the church?

How can reminding ourselves of Paul's mindset help us when we encounter one of these situations?

Read Philippians 1:19-25

What two paths is Paul torn between?

What is the benefit of life for Paul?

What is the benefit of death for Paul?

Which path does Paul say he will continue down and why?

Paul finishes the discussion of his mindset in a powerful way. This is the ultimate illustration of where his brain is focused. His biggest desire is to depart this life and be with God and if you think back to some of the things Paul has experienced in his life, you'll see why. He's been mocked, maligned, tortured, and stoned. Life for Paul was no walk in the park, and it should not be a surprise that his desire above all else was to get to heaven as fast as he could. However, because of his love for the brethren, he was willing to press on and suffer horrible hardships so that he could help them continue in the faith.

This illustration serves as a final beautiful example of Paul's humble attitude. He really did consider God's will sacred and because God cherished the souls of others, so did Paul. This attitude shines throughout all of his letters, but most especially here. His comfort and even his very life, was nothing compared to how he felt about



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encouraging others to continue steadfastly in their faith. Paul really saw others not just as annoyances or frustrations, but as souls. Souls that God loved every bit as much as He loved Paul's soul.

How can Paul's perspective here help us in our relationships with others?

What are some practical ways that we can focus more on the souls of others and try to see them as God sees them?

This should be the central focus of all of our relationships with others. If we started to see other people through God's eyes instead of our own selfish, worldly eyes, so many conflicts in the church would be avoided altogether. Don't get me wrong or misunderstand, there is a time and a place to stand up for what you believe in even if it causes tension sometimes. However, this should NEVER be simply because we didn't get our way or our feelings are hurt.

A true mark of spiritual maturity is being able to see situations and people through the eyes of God. This is much easier said than done but it is possible! We can work on retraining our brain to have a perspective that imitates Paul's. Don't forget to keep reading through the whole book of Philippians each week, this will help you keep the whole context of the book on

the forefront of your mind. As you go throughout the week be sure to be in continual prayer that God will help you see others through His eyes.