

Our Partnership in the Gospel

Philippians 1:12-20

Advancing & Exalting Christ Together

KSBC 11/15/09

Intro The Apostle Paul would probably agree with William Shakespeare that in fact, 'all the world's a stage.' The rub or disagreement would come with the next line of Shakespeare's poem which says 'and all the men and women merely players.' The idea that life with all of its phases, parts, exits and entrances is limited to merely 'playing our parts' clashes with the vital, eternal and joyful perspective of life that the scriptures describe. The scriptures before us this morning clearly teaches us that our lives are a stage with all of the parts, phases, exits and entrances intended to tell the story of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Your life in fact is a stage. Your life is communicating a clear message to all who come in contact with you. As much as we may not like the responsibility of influence and model, God has assigned each of us a stage, a story and an audience for the purpose of advancing the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A significant part of our partnership in the gospel, that self-sacrificing conformity to the advancement and exaltation of Jesus Christ, is this shared perspective about the purpose of our lives. Are we merely playing out the various phases of life with little and limited meaning? What does a life look and sound like that is dedicated to the advancement and exaltation of Jesus Christ? How can you keep your life oriented toward the supreme importance – all that really matters – of making Christ known?

Before we read our passage and learn from Paul's teaching and life, note two things that will help us as we wrestle with our joy and the ultimate significance of our lives.

1. The significance of the gospel continues to be Paul's major theme. It is the life transforming person and power of Christ that cements us together. Note various terms and phrases in 1:1-20.
2. Verse 12ff is Paul's answer to a question from the Philippian believers. The question was something like, 'How are you doing?' or 'How can we pray for you?' They knew and understood that Paul was in prison facing a trial before Caesar with a good bit of controversy swirling around him with the brothers in Rome. His life had taken a few turns that seemed rather limiting, frustrating and sad. So these questions are quite appropriate.

Using the terms of Shakespeare's poem, the question really becomes how can someone with the limitations of the various and predictable phases of life have any hope that their life means something for God? How can you keep your life oriented toward the supreme importance – all that really matters – of making Christ known?

Read Philippians 1:12-20

Embrace your God given platform.	12
Appreciate your gospel impact.	13-14
Rejoice in your annoying distractions.	15-18
Rely on God for your future joy.	18-20

Paul's explanation to the Philippians both teaches us and shows us a model for how to live our lives on the stage of here and now oriented toward present and future joy.

You make advancing and exalting Christ personal by . . .

1. Embracing your God given platform. 12

Note the direct reference to 'what has happened to me.' Paul was under house arrest, confined to one place, facing trial before Caesar and had become the object of misunderstanding and jealousy. The focus of the next few paragraphs is connecting what is going on in Paul's life to the advance of the gospel and the exaltation of Jesus Christ. A few key terms/phrases help us view our lives as a God given platform for advancing Christ.

- Identify your platform. 'what has happened to me'

What has happened to you?
What are your circumstances?
What limits you from advancing the gospel?
- Embrace your platform. 'has really served to advance'

Why these things occurring in your life?
What purpose does your life serve?

2Timothy 2:9 God's word is not chained

Do you view your life as a platform to advance the gospel in spite of weaknesses, challenges and limitations? Paul says, let me tell you something about my life and the gospel – if the gospel is advanced and Christ is exalted, I am rejoicing regardless of my circumstances.

2. Appreciate your gospel impact. 13-14

Paul now shares 2 direct results of his experience relating to the gospel. One way to answer the 'what is happening to me' question is to describe the prison, lousy food, limitations and personal misery. The right way to answer the question is to frame it in terms of what is happening with the gospel. Our lives serve to produce 2 profound results for the advancement of the gospel if we choose to live them well by faith (v6).

- For the outsider, you can make the unclear about Christ clear. 13
- For the insider, you can make the bold even bolder for Christ. 14

Note multiple terms for confidence, boldness

Illus. Acts 4:16, 29, 31 – spoke the word of God boldly

3. Rejoice in your annoying distractions.

15-18a

This next paragraph through 18 is a description of the ‘brothers’ mentioned in the previous verse. All of these brothers are speaking the word with greater courage but some are doing that in a way that is loving and encouraging to Paul while others are speaking the word in such a way as to annoy and trouble Paul. What we see here is that in addition to the limiting and difficult circumstances of imprisonment, he has brothers in Christ trying to stir up trouble for him. This is quite a challenge and typically throws us off our game of advancing the gospel. Note some basic truths that caused Paul to rejoice even when attacked by other Christians.

- There are those with good motives. goodwill, love 15,16
- There will always be those with selfish motives. rivalry, envy, selfish ambition 15,17
- The most important thing is the gospel. I am put here 16, 18

Cmp 1Thess.2:5

Note reversal – what was intended to cause trouble ended up causing great joy!

4. Rely on God for your future joy.

18b-20

The experience of unusual joy because Christ is seen and exalted through your life is connected to 3 foundational truths of the Christian life found in these verses. These are the bedrock of your confidence that God is using your life – on your stage – to make Christ clear and give others courage to advance the gospel.

- As people pray for you, God answers with sufficient grace. 19
- As you yield to the Holy Spirit, He actively provides strength and help. 19
- As you trust God with your life, he will faithfully deliver you. 19, 20

These truths are the real life sources of courage that leads you to care more about the exaltation of Christ in your life than anything else.

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Take Aways

1. Pray.

Ask several people to pray for you that God will help you embrace your platform for the advancement of the gospel.

Thank God for those who have encouraged you by keeping Christ first in their challenges.

2. Consider.

What is your life message, what is your important thing?

Yielding your life to the Lordship of Christ and his Spirit's control.

3. Rejoice.

Do you see evidences of the person and power of Christ around you this morning? Rejoice!

Can you answer, 'how you doing?' with joy connecting your life platform to the exaltation of Christ?

Study Questions

1. Read Philippians 1:1-20 as a group. Note the references to the gospel, Christ, speaking the word, etc. List the five characteristics of a gospel centered church from last week's study. What is a partnership in the gospel?
2. Have group members describe their lives from the perspective of a platform to advance the gospel and exalt Christ. What opportunities, limitations, audiences, messages, etc do you have in your life?
3. Share a story from your experience of how you have been given courage by watching someone else exalt Christ courageously in difficult circumstances. How is Christ made clearer to people through how you live your life?
4. Read Acts 4:16-31. Note the number of references to speaking the word boldly. Where did the boldness come from? How can you become bolder, more courageous to speak up for Christ?
5. Read 1:18 from our passage. What is Paul saying? Have you ever thought this way about life circumstances or people who were troubling you? Why or why not?
6. Review the 3 foundational truths taught in verses 19-20. How are any of these truths connected to your confidence and future joy? What is future joy in your life?

7. Review take away #1. Ask people in your group to pray specifically for you about your growth in advancing the gospel from the platform of your life now. Pray as a group for each other, thanking God for people who have given you courage in your faith.

8. What do you want to do, use or remember from today's study?