

## Let Your Light Shine: For the Gospel

Philippians 1:12-22a

### Introduction / Recap

The past two Sundays have brought messages that have challenged us to Let our Light Shine and that we are to Follow Jesus. Both of these messages center on an emphasis of fulfilling the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:18-20

*“<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

This commission from Jesus is a mission for all of us. As followers of Jesus – his disciples – we are called to 2 things - both evangelism and discipleship. And those are represented in the Great Commission.

“Advance the local church by the gathering the Saints - Advance the worldwide church by scattering them.”

– Clint Clifton, NAMB Send City: DC Coordinator

Evangelism being:

- from Medieval Latin evangelismus "a spreading of the Gospel,"
- from Late Latin evangelium - "good news, gospel,"
- from Greek euangelion (transliteration - evangelical)
- In reference to evangelical Protestantism

Noun

- the preaching or promulgation of the gospel; the work of an evangelist.
- evangelicalism (adjective)
- missionary zeal, purpose, or activity.

Verb

- (in Protestant churches) the practice of spreading the Christian gospel - Church term evangelization, evangelize

All too often we over-complicate the idea of evangelism. We fret and stress over thinking we need know a specific form of communication. Tools and methods are helpful and give us confidence and a plan to share – so I am for them. But we get hung up on them too...to our disadvantage and others. We tend to make excuses that if we don't have down the 5 points of evangelism, we are not equipped to share...

“Evangelism is the communication of the gospel by saved people to lost people”  
– Alvin Reid

Discipleship being:  
Religious term

- one of the 12 personal followers of Christ.
- one of the 70 followers sent forth by Christ. Luke 10:1.
- any other professed follower of Christ in His lifetime.
- any follower of Christ.
- member of the Disciples of Christ.
- a person who is a pupil or an adherent of the doctrines of another; follower:

“A disciple is one who thinks, feels and acts like Jesus Christ. It is being conformed to the image of Christ as Romans 8:28-29 states—that God’s number one purpose in our lives is to make us like Jesus.” —Rick Warren

Dr. Howard Hendricks defines it as:

“Discipling others is the process by which a Christian with a life worth emulating commits himself or herself for an extended period of time to a few individuals who have been won to Christ, the purpose being to aid and guide their growth to maturity and equip them to reproduce themselves in a third spiritual generation.”

As followers of Jesus we are to have God’s heart beat for the world and our work, our efforts, our motives are to be in line with His:

John 3:16

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”*

The Gospel: The teaching or revelation of Christ. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ

- Old English: God spell
- Latin & Greek forms of evangelism

### **Transition / Vision Challenge**

Our attention and our purpose is to be centered on this reality at all times. We can look around today in our culture and nation and see the desperate and urgent need not only to communicate the Gospel but to stand firm in it!

Here at Crosslink Community Church it is our purpose to Glorify God in everything we do.

Our vision is to: Impact the Valley and Bless the Nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ

In our mission we want to see people Meeting Jesus, Following Jesus, Serving Jesus and Sharing Jesus.

During our search process for our new lead pastor, who is Pastor Matthew Kirkland – and praise the Lord – Amen?

Our search team chairman, Nathan Beyeler coined a phrase that Crosslink doesn't need fixing...it needs furthering.

And as Pastor Matthew comes, we anticipate with great excitement the ways in which God will use him to do just that – to further Crosslink to be a light in this city, in this valley and the among the nations.

Pastor Matthew will be back and be here to stay on Sunday June 19<sup>th</sup>!

**Until that time** – over the next few Sundays we are going to focus on the idea of Letting our Light Shine. Of being purposeful and missional in what we do as individuals and what we can accomplish as the body of Christ.

We are going to hear from A NAMB church planter.

We are going to hear from a Professor of Evangelism at Liberty University who is a renowned authority on the subject of evangelism.

We are going to hear from a pastor who has a huge heart for missions, having participated in and led dozens of mission trips to dozens of nations. He is a member of the DART (Disaster Assistance Response Team) program of Samaritan's Purse.

And then, to conclude this theme of missional emphasis, I will come back to bookend our look at Philippians wrapping up this season of preparation. That's what this is by the way – a time to prepare. It is a time to gear up. Pastor Matthew brings with him a passion to ignite our vision as a church to a new level. His message 2 weeks ago paves the way for the next few weeks and ultimately for when he is here with us.

It might be easy especially as we head into the summer time to “check-out” thinking well – we will launch a new worship center and have a new pastor soon. I'll check back in when those things happen. I exhort you...do not be deceived with that kind of complacency. The next few weeks will bring a time where we as a church remember that we are to Impact the Valley and Bless the Nations.

### **Background / Segue**

Paul's letter to the Church at Philippi is my 2<sup>nd</sup> favorite letter of Paul's with Colossians being the first. I have always enjoyed reading and studying Philippians – after all one of the themes it teaches is that of “joy.” It is direct, it is practical, it is a treasure trove of truth and exhortation for our lives as followers of Jesus.

Before we unpack our passage for today, let us understand how Paul addresses and emphasizes the Gospel. With just a quick skimming of the surface we find him addressing the significance of the message and proclamation of the Gospel over 20 times in his letters:

- Romans: 1, 2, 10, 15 and 16
- 1 Corinthians 1, 2, 4, 11, and 15
- Galatians 1
- Ephesians 3
- Colossians 1
- 1 Timothy 1, 2, and 3

And in the letter to the Philippians, our focus today, we can find multiple times in each chapter a reference, an emphasis on the importance of conveying or as Paul puts it “advancing” the Gospel.

Advancement of the Gospel is literally confessing Christ before others.

John MacArthur states: “a characteristic of every genuine believer is that he or she will profess faith in Christ unreservedly.”

Just as Paul wrote in Romans 1:16 –  
“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation...”

So let’s dive in and unpack what Jesus has to teach us through His mouthpiece the apostle Paul about the Gospel being proclaimed and Letting our Light shine in our passage today:

If you are physically able, stand for the reading of God’s Word.

**Scripture Reading:** Philippians 1:12-22a

Like Paul we are to strive to advance or further the Gospel.

The theological principle lying at the foundation of this passage and basically supplying the motivation for virtually everything Paul says in it is that our human circumstances lie in God’s hands and that God uses them to advance the Gospel.

Instead of reporting to the church at Philippi how he is doing – which is what they were concerned about – he talks about how the Gospel is doing.

Karl Barth says:

“He just would not be an apostle if he could not speak objectively about his own situation in abstraction from the course of the Gospel, to which he has sacrificed his subjectivity and therewith also all objective interest in his person. To the question how it is with *him* the apostle *must* react with information as to how it is with the Gospel.”

**Know the Call**

*Verse 12 - Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,*

More than anything else, Paul's desire as a missionary was to preach the Gospel in Rome. The hub of the great empire, Rome was the key city of its day. Paul knew, from there, the message would be carried across the world. Rome was our modern day social media. Once something gets on it – it spreads everywhere.

Paul wanted to go to Rome as a preacher, but instead he went as a prisoner. Paul writes to the church at Philippi during his first Roman imprisonment.

Paul's circumstances did not distract him from his call

What happened to Paul since he had last seen the Philippians? Well, he intentionally does not go into detail here but we do know what his situation was.

Although Paul did not itemize the obstacles in this letter, he did discuss them elsewhere – in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27. Luke also recorded the historical background of that period of the apostle's life in Acts 20:6-28:31.

We know he was in prison, we know he had suffered difficulties and struggles but I'm going to take the cue from our apostle and spend time looking at them...because just as Paul directs our attention they are not important.

The call is important.

The advancement, the furtherance, the greater progress of the Gospel is what is eminent here.

This phrase describes a pioneer – beating or cutting a path through a densely forested area. It refers to the forward movement of something in spite of obstacles, dangers or distractions. Paul's circumstances created new and greater opportunities for his call to preach the Gospel. The very problems that had obstructed Paul had actually cleared the path. God sometimes uses strange tools to help us pioneer the Gospel.

Again, Romans 8:28 is a reminder -

*“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

Paul knew his Calling. It was foremost in his mind.

We must remember and know our call.

Our personal witness is on the line every day. In the midst of your circumstances – are you furthering the Gospel?

Paul's presence in Rome as a prisoner awaiting trial had really served to advance the Gospel. His primary concern was that the Gospel go forward. This often happened through adverse circumstances, but as long as it happened, Paul could be joyful. To many Paul's circumstances would have looked like failure, but not to Paul with a single mind for the Gospel.

### **Know your Chains**

Verse 13 – *“so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,”*

Along with knowing our call – we must also know our chains. Paul did.

You have probably heard of Charles Spurgeon, the famous British preacher of the 1800s, but less familiar is the story of his dear wife, Susannah. Early in their married life, Mrs. Spurgeon became an invalid. It looked as though her only ministry would be encouraging her husband and praying for his work. But God gave her a burden to share her husband's books with pastors who were unable to purchase them. This burden soon led to the founding of the “Book Fund.” As a work of faith, the Book Fund provided thousands of pastors with tools for their work. All this was supervised by Mrs. Spurgeon from her home. It was a pioneer ministry.

Susannah Spurgeon understood, excepted and embraced her chains.

Each of our chains look different. Some of our chains are physical like hers were. Some are financial, some chains look like fear. Some look like busyness. Some might even be the dark past of an imprisonment or former life of sin before Christ.

Others – just the normal circumstances of life can be seen as chains – raising a family with young screaming kids at home all day, exhaustion from working 3 jobs to make ends meet...

The same God who used Moses' rod, Gideon's pitchers, and David's sling used Paul's chains. Little did the Romans realize that the chains affixed to his wrists would release Paul instead of bind him!

Paul reflects this in 2 Timothy 2:9 –

*“for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.”*

He did not complain about his chains, his imprisonment – even though as a missionary it was preventing him from doing what he wanted to do and the plans he had for preaching the Gospel.

*“the cause of Christ”*

Literally means – that he has imprisoned to the cause of Christ – Paul didn't see himself as being in prison in a Roman jail – he was imprisoned, captive to the cause of Christ – no matter what his circumstance was!

This is a hard reality to accept! All too often – all we can see is our chains. The thing that is holding us back. It's unfair. It's wrong. It's difficult. It's complicated. It's hurtful.

Those things may well be true. But it is when we become focused on the chains of life to a point our effectiveness for the Gospel is compromised that they truly become chains...

Know your chains, as Paul did. We must have the mind of Paul...therefore the mind of Christ so that thru our chains we can see our circumstances

### **Know your Circumstances**

Verse 14 – *“and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear”*

Maybe a better word here would be to “embrace” your circumstances – but that would mess up my perfectly consistent outline and alliteration. Nope.

Be that as it may – all of this gave fresh encouragement to the Christians of Rome. When Paul arrived in their city as a prisoner for the Gospel's sake, some of them were wondering how safe it would be for them to be known as those who professed the same faith as he did. According to Luke in Acts 28:21, the leaders of the Jewish community in Rome judged it best to know nothing about Paul or his case.

Denial. Remind you of the shameful decision another apostle made once?

But as the Gospel became a talking point because of Paul's presence in Rome, the Christians exploited the situation and to bear their public witness with greater confidence and vigor.

Look around you church. Watch the news for just one evening. Those times of persecution and imprisonment for Christians are here again.

Paul's obedience affected other Christians. He made a difference by embracing his circumstance.

This resolve brought confidence in three areas:

1. Non-Christians became Christians
2. Nominal Christians became courageous
3. The passionate prisoner became more passionate

As we stand tall for Christ, we will encourage others to do the same.

It has been said that everything God gives us, he gives to give to others.

What is your witness giving to others?

What do you allow your circumstances to do for the sake of the Gospel?

The secret is this: when you have the single mind, you look on your circumstances as God-given opportunities for the furtherance of the Gospel; and you rejoice at what God is going to do instead of complaining, worrying, or rejecting what God did not do.

### **Know the Conflict**

Verse 15-18 - *“Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; <sup>16</sup> the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; <sup>17</sup> the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.”*

The conflict is all around us.

From within and from without.

False teachers preaching a form of the Gospel but lacking any truth  
Almost weekly we can hear of another pastor or another church taking up compromise in God’s Word.

There are even preachers who preach from selfish ambition, envy and strife, like Paul was describing here

Churches are divided. Traditional Protestantism and modern Evangelicalism are mired in conflict and ambiguity.

The world is at war with Christianity – From radical Islam to radical liberalism. The threat to the Gospel is real.

Yet...what does Paul say? What is his mindset?

The conflict brought Paul contentment!

In this passage Paul expresses an interesting idea here of “contention” in the Greek. The reference speaks to “canvassing for office, to get people to support you.” Paul’s aim was to glorify Christ and get people to follow Him. His critics aim was to promote themselves or their idea of truth and win a following of their own. Instead of asking, “Have you trusted Christ?” they asked, “Whose side are you on – ours or Paul’s?” Unfortunately this kind of religious politics is still seen today. And the people who practice it need to realize that they are only hurting themselves.

When you have a single mind you look on your critics or look at your conflicts as opportunities for the furtherance of the Gospel.

Verse 18: *What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.*”

Paul rejoiced at the preaching of the gospel that took place out of those conflicts. He did not rejoice in the faulty motivation, the attacks, and the persecution. But he rejoiced in the opportunity they brought to preach the Gospel either indirectly or directly.

What is the conflict situation you are dealing with today? What is your response going to be?

### **Know the Crisis**

Verse 19-20

*“for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, <sup>20</sup> according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”*

The crisis Paul faced or at least the one he focused on was not one of physical preservation, one of freedom or comfort or even reputation but rather with all boldness and integrity Christ would be exalted.

Wow.

Paul was hopeful and expectant that this current crisis is one he would be released from, but that wasn't his primary concern.

His “deliverance” was a day by day application sustained by those who were lifting him in prayer.

The “provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ:” Paul's dependence was on the powerful resources of God ministered by the Holy Spirit.

Henry Blackaby once wrote:

*The missionaries need your prayers,  
The preachers need them too;  
Without the help of the praying saints  
There's not much they can do.*

The crisis Paul was acknowledging was ongoing. His current predicament was temporary one way or another. He was so focused on the Gospel that it was always the end of his current means. “Even now, as always, Christ exalted”

We must realize the big picture crisis we are in. It is a battle. A battle for Christ to be made known. The crisis is not temporal nor the temporary things of this life but it is eternal.

Paul expresses this to the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 4:18 –

*“while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

We are ambassadors for Christ! 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Paul says this best in 2 Corinthians 6:2-10

“...Behold, now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,” behold, now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION”—<sup>3</sup> giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, <sup>4</sup> but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, <sup>5</sup> in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, <sup>6</sup> in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, <sup>7</sup> in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, <sup>8</sup> by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; *regarded* as deceivers and yet true; <sup>9</sup> as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.”

Paul challenges us that we must look past the crisis to the call and be mindful of what we are here for.

- Because of Paul’s chains, Christ was known
- Because of Paul’s conflicts, Christ was in effect preached
- Because of Paul’s crisis, Christ was magnified

### **Know the Cost**

Verse 21-22a

<sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.

“Fight for us, O God, that we not drift numb and blind and foolish into vain and empty excitements. Life is too short, too precious, too painful to waste on worldly bubbles that burst. Heaven is too great, hell is too horrible, eternity is too long that we should putter around on the porch of eternity.”

– John Piper

Paul’s single mind was the Gospel and the cause of Christ

J.D. Greear has some excellent points to make when Knowing the Cost – in his book *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary*:

- “The Gospel has done its work in us, when we crave God more than anything we crave else in life.”
- “Stop waiting on God to tell you to offer your life for the kingdom. He’s already done that. Instead, ask Him to show you how best to do it.”

- “The gospel has done its work in us when we crave God more than we crave everything else in life and when seeing His kingdom advance in the lives of others gives us more joy than anything we could own. When we see Jesus as greater than anything the world can offer, we’ll gladly let everything else go to possess Him.”

The Cost is surrender. The cost is commitment. The cost is results.

Fruitful labor

## **Background & Mission Testimony**

From the time I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade I knew I was supposed to be a pastor. That was who I was, what I was meant to do for God. There was clear direction - alignment and clarity from the Lord.

I was always single minded in my focus.

In high school I earned the nickname Pastor Mike. Loved it because it was an external affirmation of who and what I knew I was called to be and showed that my witness was evident. I hated it too. I am not a Mike. I have grown well past loathing that to it being a mild annoyance. =)

Why was I insecure then and what does this background have to do with our missional emphasis theme and the message today? I will tell you:

My earthly father. Not an encouragement. Not a good example. He told me enough times that I could not be a pastor. I would not be a good one. My father’s parents questioned and criticized it too comparing me to their oldest son, my uncle, who was a missionary. That attack on my call and my identity from my father, it damaged my understanding and view of missions and missionaries for years. I became bitter.

Hebrews 12:15

*“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;”*

The writer of Hebrews is giving us a clear warning on the destructiveness of bitterness. A disciple of Jesus does not allow himself to become “trapped” in bitterness. The context of this verse is the giving and receiving of rebuke. Many a person has become bitter because someone hurt them, called them out, embarrassed them, lied about them, offended them in some way.

I managed to separate what it was to be a missionary and be a pastor and for a long time looked down on missionaries because to me they represented my uncle. The way he lived as a so called missionary only further jaded my view of missions and missionaries.

I may have been righteous in my cause and been the wounded wronged one by my father and others.

But it was I who was wrong. My heart was wrong. My heart had become hardened to the very call that I have – that each one of us has – as disciples of Jesus because of my chains and circumstances. I forgot the call.

The Great commission is NOT specifically for pastors. Not for full time missionaries. It is not at all about vocational ministry.

I was in crisis and didn't even know it.

Until Liberty University. That place, and the experiences contained within those years shaped and reshaped the man who I am today.

At first and for a while Liberty made this conflict infinitely worse for me. Liberty – the mecca of missionary emphasis assaulted my shrouded secret of hating missions.

Despite all that, God led me to become a campus pastor at Liberty. And...it was not until that first year that I could hide no longer.

By the position God had allowed me to be in and thru the influences that came with it before I knew it I not only was going on my first mission trip...but I was co-leading a team of 16 college students overseas to East Asia w/ the Director himself.

It was that trip...that experience...that confrontation of my own demons that brought about the break thru in my life. My eyes were opened, my heart softened and I went from a quiet protester of missions to a passionate advocate for God's heart beat for the world...

“Being able to articulate the gospel with accuracy is one thing; having its truth captivate your soul is quite another.”

- J.D. Greear

## **Conclusion**

“God is not calling us to go to church; he is calling us to be His church.”

- Craig Groeschel

“Your church is not the answer to the problem of lostness in your city; the gospel you church preaches is the answer.”

- Clint Clifton

The challenge today: Let your Light Shine – For the Gospel.

We say our vision is to impact the valley and bless the nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Is it? Now is a good time to take a reading on this, a temperature. Individually so.