

2025-8-17

Philippians
Part 3
Learning to See Life
from God's Perspective



TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of **DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Starter Question

- From Sunday's sermon, what did you **like best**, or what **caught your attention most**—and **why**?

Observation—*What do I see?*

- Pastor Doug asked us to memorize 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Let's take two minutes now to do that.
"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
- List the three commands given in this passage. OK, now let's explore each one individually:
 - (1) According to Dictionary.com, to "rejoice" is to "be glad or take delight in" something.
What limitations does 1 Thessalonians 5 place on our rejoicing?
 - (2) Dictionary.com notes that prayer involves making sincere, respectful, humble requests to God.
What limitations does 1 Thessalonians 5 place on our praying?
 - (3) To "thank" is "to express gratitude, appreciation, or acknowledgment."
What limitations does 1 Thessalonians 5 place on our gratitude?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- What would have to be true of (a) **us**, (b) of **God**, and (c) of **circumstances** for us to sincerely, from the heart, be glad and grateful in any and all circumstances and at all times?
- What role does prayer—sincere, respectful, humble requesting of God—play in being glad and grateful?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- OK, time to check our gauges! Draw a needle on each gauge reflecting where you are today:



Now draw an arrow on each gauge—
are trending toward fuller or emptier—and why?

What can **you** do to trend toward fuller on each?
What can **we** do to help you trend toward fuller?

Sermon Summary Text: Philippians 1:12-18

Last week we saw that, despite his imprisonment, Paul was thankful, joyous, and positive. We too can be thankful when we face perplexing circumstances. We often have unspoken expectations that since we are following God, he should shield us from life's troubles. But they still come, don't they? When troubles come our way we ask ourselves: "Why isn't God blessing our family or our church in the way that we think He should?" "Why did this bad thing happen?" "Why did this obstacle to success pop up?" "Are these struggles a sign of God's displeasure?" "Is our discouragement warranted?" "Are we seeing things the way God sees them?" These are important questions, and today we are going to talk about them. Paul's goal in this section of his letter is to change the Philippians' perspective on his circumstances. Knowing that Paul wanted to share the gospel with all of Rome, yet he went there as a prisoner, the Philippians were perplexed by his captivity, just as we get perplexed by our circumstances sometimes.

Paul explains to his friends in Philippi that his circumstances in prison are actually advancing the gospel, not hindering it. He wants them to see that what appears to be a bad thing is actually a good thing! Why? Because God is using it to reach people who ordinarily might not be reached. The attitude Paul is addressing here is seeing our circumstances from God's perspective rather than from a human perspective. This problem isn't unique to the Philippian Church; it's something with which we all struggle. It's especially easy to feel distant from God when our circumstances prevent us from doing something we feel that God has called us to do. But if we allow our perspective of our circumstances to prevail, it can render us useless to God. Frustration can turn into bitterness and hopelessness, making us completely ineffective (Psalm 73:21-22). Most of the time, God chooses to change our attitude about our circumstances, rather than the circumstances themselves. The key to usefulness is to see things from God's perspective rather than from our own human perspective. It is only then that we find the hope, courage, and faith to move forward. Otherwise, we remain stuck in our false version of reality. And that is not a good place to be.

Paul elaborates on how his circumstances are actually a good thing because the news of his imprisonment for Christ's sake has spread far and wide. Paul singles out the praetorian guard from everyone else. For Paul, the guard is a strategic mission field. Paul intentionally distinguishes between the Praetorian Guard and everyone else. Paul does a similar thing in v.14. There he distinguishes a group he refers to as "most of the brethren" from another smaller group of believers. These brethren saw Paul fearlessly proclaiming the gospel in the midst of his imprisonment, and it inspired them to proclaim Christ, despite the negative ramifications it might bring. They too could end up in prison.

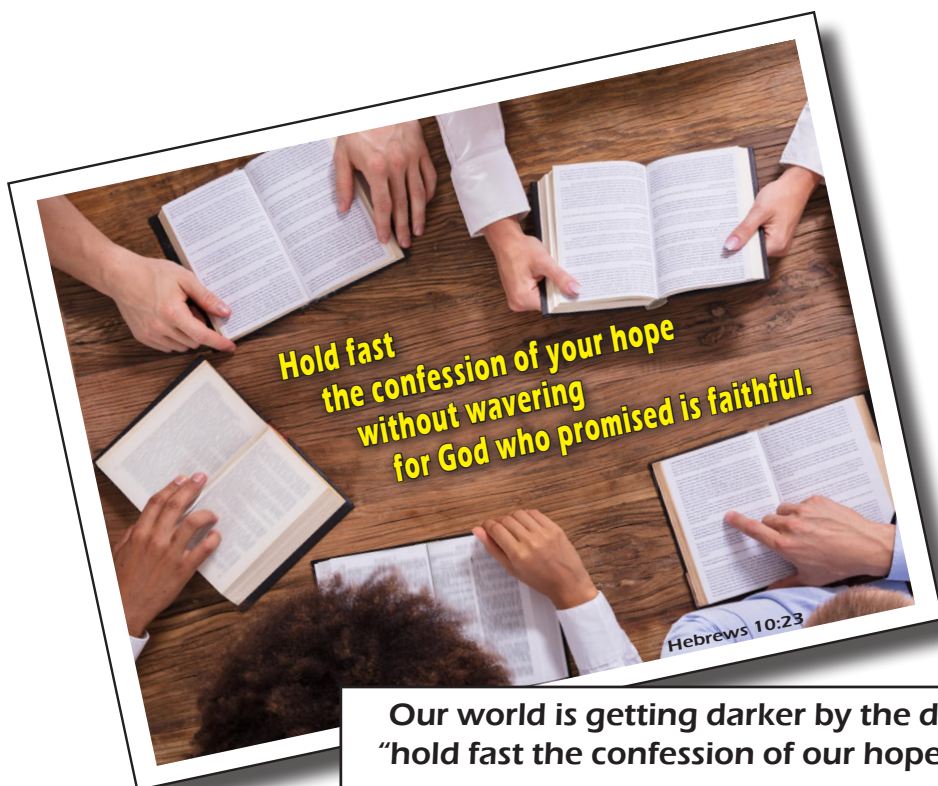
But what impact did Paul's imprisonment have on the yet unspecified "smaller subgroup of believers?" (v. 15,17) Despite Paul's imprisonment, the gospel was still being broadly shared, but not everyone was doing so out of pure motives. Some were motivated by selfish ambition. Some hoped to cause Paul distress in his imprisonment. Why? Because they were jealous of Paul and the success of his ministry. We also see evidence of such jealousy in Luke 9:46 and Luke 22:24. In any group of people, there is a tendency to try to establish a pecking order. Why do we feel so compelled to compete with one another? It was exactly this kind of thing that was going on during Paul's imprisonment. Some Christian leaders saw his confinement as an opportunity to make a name for themselves. They were competing with Paul, rather than serving Jesus. Their eyes were on the wrong person (Jeremiah 17:9).

We have two groups of people operating from two sets of motives. The majority were motivated by love and goodwill, the minority by envy and strife. Paul wants the Philippians to know that his imprisonment hasn't changed his God-given role as an Apostle to the Gentiles. His imprisonment, far from being a setback, is actually a step forward! When we feel God has forgotten us or abandoned us, or is mistreating us, we have to make a decision. "Will we trust in our own perspective?" "Will we trust that He is still in control?" "Will we believe that He still loves us and that the gospel will move forward despite whatever obstacles seem to be in the way?" God is at work in the midst of your circumstances—no matter how wacky it all may seem to you.

While Paul would surely rather people share the gospel from pure motives—he is all about the gospel being shared. He just wants Christ to be proclaimed (v. 18). Paul seeks to change their view by helping them consider the outcome of his imprisonment. Rather than fret over his imprisonment or over some people's impure motives for doing ministry, Paul chooses to rejoice over the results! REJOICING IS A CHOICE! It doesn't always come naturally. To truly rejoice, you have to do more than just passively accept your circumstances. You have to trust God and be thankful for your circumstances—even though you may not be able to envision how God is going to work all of this out. Your trust is based upon the character of the God who began this good work of gospel ministry in you (1:6).

Too often, our trust in God is based on our own understanding or is with only part of our heart. When the storms of life come, and they will come, we must choose to trust the Lord with all of our heart and not lean on our own understanding (Acts 9:15-16; Prov. 3:5-6). That is what Paul is doing here, and it enables him to continually rejoice in whatever circumstances he finds himself. One of the greatest tests for trust is the presence of thanksgiving in your life. This is a prominent theme that resonates throughout Philippians. If I'm grumbling about my circumstances, then chances are, I'm leaning on my own understanding. If I'm really trusting that God is in control of all things, it will be reflected in my perspective and in my choices. My choice to trust in God's character enables me to give thanks even when my circumstances are difficult or perplexing. You may find yourself right now in circumstances that you don't like, and don't understand. God may choose to change your circumstances, but there is a better chance that He wants to change your perspective of your circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

God may sometimes choose to change our circumstances, but more often, he wants to change us. He wants us to look beyond what our eyes can see, and trust God to work it all out for our good and His glory. He wants you to choose to rejoice and give thanks, not just when/if your circumstances change for the better, but right now - in the midst of those circumstances. Will you choose to do that?



Our world is getting darker by the day, and so we *must* "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering!"

Hebrews 10:23

So, what do we believe...

- ...about the nature of the Trinity?
- ...about God's daily involvement in our lives?
- ...about whether other religions lead to heaven?
- ...about how we can live faithfully in a hostile world?

And, why do we believe that?

Join other TCC adults as together we explore thirty truths of "the faith we profess"!

When? Beginning the first week of September
Wednesday nights (6³⁰-8⁰⁰pm) **or**
Thursday mornings (9³⁰-11⁰⁰am)
or anytime **On-Demand!**

Where? Second Modular

How? Simply **scan here** for complete info ➡



Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 calls all believers to **joy**, **prayer** and **gratitude** at all times.
Let's explore each of these—because *"that is God's will for us in Christ Jesus"*!

Monday— Joy: What does it mean that we rejoice "*in the Lord*" (Philippians 4:4). What's the alternative?

Tuesday— Joy: Why does Paul repeat himself (Philippians 4:4)? Is twice enough, or do you need more?

Wednesday— Prayer: Pray "without ceasing"—**but not** with "meaningless repetition" (Matthew 6:7).

Thursday— Prayer: What light does Luke 18:1–8 shed on "praying **without ceasing**"?

Friday— Gratitude: What does a lack of gratitude suggest about us (Romans 1:18–21)?

Saturday— Gratitude: What should be our response to the consistently ungrateful (2 Timothy 3:1–5)?

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]