

“...walk worthily...” from the Book of Philippians

Scripture Block: Pp 1:12-30

Theme: TO LIVE, IS TO ACCOMPLISH THE PURPOSES OF GOD.

Life verse: Pp 1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

Today's passage: Pp 1:12-14

Notes We are ready to move into our next block of Scripture¹, which as you can see also entails a new “life verse.” Before we move into the details of today’s portion of Scripture, I would like to give you a broad outline of the entire block.

- In verses 12-18, we have the big picture overview of Paul’s current situation, i.e. his imprisonment in Rome.
- In verses 19-26, Paul displays his heart-attitude toward the situation.
- In verses 27-30, Paul gives some direct application for the church in Philippi, and by association, to us.

Interpretation

Let’s begin by taking a closer look at vs. 12:

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has
against
instead further against obstacles
really served to advance the Gospel.

Paul is in a difficult situation—most likely a prisoner of Nero in Rome. He has been under arrest for many months and has already experienced a great deal of physical suffering and emotional stress during what we might consider the “appeals” process that has finally landed him in Rome. The Philippians have heard of his difficulties, and likely they fear for Paul’s life and are discouraged about the termination of his ministry. Paul wants to update them on the **real** situation. I have added a few clarifying comments after studying the Greek text, to make sure we really grasp Paul’s intent in this verse.

- Certainly, there are physical and spiritual forces that have come **against** Paul.
- However, the expected outcome of hindering the Gospel message has not occurred.
- **Instead**, these things have advanced the Gospel—an advancement against obstacles to be sure, but an advancement nonetheless.

¹ From an organizational standpoint, we could easily end this block a few verses earlier; however for the sake of simplicity, we will carry it through to the end of chapter 1.

In verses 13-14, Paul is now going to give two examples of how the Gospel has been furthered—first outside of the Christian community and then within.

Application

1. Doesn't the principle of Rm 8:28 fairly leap off the page? This is a down to earth and gritty example of a principle that has been played out from the book of Genesis (how about Joseph) through Revelation—God can cause all things, including the evil intent of man, to work together for good.

2. It is essential that we realize this is true, not only with respect to the purposes of God, but within the life of the individual believer. We must couple Rm 8:29 with verse 28. Part of what is going on in our lives as God is “working” hard things towards a good end, is that He is in the process of conforming us to the image of his Son—for as believers, we are his brothers and sisters and are to become like Him.

3. Do you want to be like Christ? A pretty easy question—of course we do! However, here is a more difficult one. Do you think you can develop godly character and dependence upon God, i.e. become like Christ, apart from the presence of personal trials and struggles in this life? This is a much more difficult question to answer honestly because of the ramifications.

- If we say yes, i.e. choose Christ-likeness apart from trials, then we can't possibly understand what perseverance is, or what it means to “rest” in the promises of God.
- If we say no, then we have to acknowledge that, much as we don't like them, trials and difficulties are really a necessary part of God's plan of development for each one of us—in fact they will ultimately be a blessing.
- It is a very difficult thing to in essence “choose trials”, or at least agree with God that they are a necessary part of our development. Thankfully, they are in his keeping as to time and type, and through them he will never forsake us, nor allow us to be tested beyond what we can bear.

Keeping Things in Balance

One item to keep in mind: we don't have to force things to work together for good—that's God's job. Ours is simply to “fix our eyes upon Jesus” (Heb 12:1-2), and let God work out the details.