

Intro & Structure

good to be here. prayer.

explain

3 sections: what has happened to me, what has happened, whatever happens one might give these titles to the three sections

-the advance of the gospel **in the world**

-the advance of the gospel **in an individual heart**

-the advance of the gospel **in the church**

1. The advance of the gospel in the world

"What has happened to me" (Paul)

my situation; this is my news; this is what's happening

1. What happened **before** this letter was written

Young church. Background to the early days.. Acts 16

Paul was in Macedonia, led by the Spirit.. place of prayer.. Lydia..

magistrates.. prison, earthquake, jailer.. had to leave.. so after a few days a small church in Philippi

2. **(current situation)**

Paul is in prison again – The Philippians hear about Paul's imprisonment and are concerned.. Paul is still in prison.. is this normal? is this to be expected? – are hindrances to be expected? what's going on?

'in **chains** for Christ' – what has this lead to? (results) – is it negative only? – not at all – quite the contrary:

- clear proclamation for Christ

- others more confident in the gospel (no matter what thrown at us)

Paul's bold stand – inspires others.. (as we learn to stand for Christ without fear others will be encouraged to stand)

- the gospel is preached

- Outcome – 'Christ is preached' **'What has happened has served to advance the gospel'**

- and because of this I rejoice..

3. Respond – don't worry Philippians – **this is what's important**

- as we look at our lives (indivs/together) – that is what's important.

This comes as a – **challenge** to us in two ways. ('heart surgery')

1. What matters in life? (e.g.s of what not..)
the gospel advance – is this also our heart beat?
2. seeing our situations straight – ‘discerning what best’ – expect opposition; learning not to fear, to be confident
What really matters to us? What really matters to you? (apply challenge)

Consider – The church advancing in Oxford, in the world,
– and because of this I rejoice.. Whatever situation we find ourselves
– whether people are doing it from wrong reasons that’s not the point if they are truly preaching Christ, and not distorting the gospel of grace.
– Are you rejoicing?

When you read the news learn to see beyond the specifics. It is in this context that the gospel is advancing.

>> modern day Christian witness in prison.. Open Doors – we can pray
– we are living at an incredible moment of history, all over the world
the gospel is advancing, the message of Christ is being proclaimed
‘and because of this **I rejoice**’

2. The advance of the gospel in an individual - 18b-26

Paul now looking ahead (to the **future**)

What’s going to happen to me?

He's on death row.. Possible martyrdom.. (explain)
if he is martyred or not – what will this mean?

1 firstly we note he is incredibly **confident** and he is **rejoicing**
confident – 19 1. God’s provision – 2. your prayers
so as he faces the future he does so with rejoicing
‘what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance’ explain – both good prospects
20 not saying this is automatic or easy – but this is his aim: **exalting Christ**

Paul as an example of exalting Christ
– by rejoicing ‘I will continue to rejoice’
– by the Spirit ‘God’s provision of the Spirit’
– by reliance of the prayers of others ‘through your prayers’ – and your prayers are vital too.

“Philippians please pray for me – that I might stand for Christ in prison
– its not easy – I’m tempted to duck out and be quiet”
How about us? Is this our passion? Do we ask others to pray that we would

not be ashamed – We won't stand firm, have courage to stand for Christ (work, family, community) unless we pray for each other for this."

Not that its automatic or easy to live in this way.
'no way be ashamed' (each section have this theme)

How is this possible? 21 'For me to live..'
Paul's heart-beat – orientation in life
(contrast what ours is often – **'to live is me, and to die is a pain'**)

2 then Paul gets really **personal**, he gives us a **'Window into his own heart'**– how he choses to live – what's uppermost in his mind as he faces the future – martyrdom/more life: 'For me to live is Christ' What does this mean? – Paul explains this in 22–26 (priorities)

Firstly desire of the heart: (core of this section – 'modus operandus' of Paul)

– **'I desire to depart and be with Christ'** – the tension – and this challenge – being with Christ is better by far – apply challenge

"I *desire* to depart and be with Christ"

That's the centre – without this as a growing reality at the core of our hearts – we won't use our time here well – we may be living for some project.. the advance of the gospel, but we won't be living for the one who calls us to this. (see why I called this open heart surgery)
not just at the beginning of our Christian lives, but always – don't lose your first love.

but:

– it is **more necessary to remain**
commitment, and labour, (Paul is seeing straight)
So what will he do in the time left here?:

2. out-workings of the heart:

– **'fruitful labour'** (22) apple tree, in winter; also 'labour'
– **'your progress and joy in the faith'** (25)

"it is more necessary that I remain" – there's a function to this – I'm not to just wait around until the day of Christ, fold my arms and wait – no we are to use the time now productively for Christ – and that's all about love – look back to v8. He longs with Christ's love, he longs for the people of God – that's why 'it is more necessary for you' – almost – ok so if I'm not martyred I will gladly spend my live for you – n.b.

'progress and joy' in the faith

- is this what matters to you?
- this is to be our aim for each other – using the gifts God has given us
- what a shallow life living for me.. and to die a pain – called to something bigger, higher. Guard your heart, consider what you live for.

“Paul was confident in God, but couldn't live like this on his own, he looked to the prayers of others and the help of the Spirit. We too can't live like this unless we pray for each other and depend on the Holy Spirit. Together we live for the progress and joy of each other – this is to be our priority.”

“I desire to depart”

Do we really? I mean really – is that what we want?

This is what controls Paul – he sees things and loves from Christ's perspective and power.

(could speak on because of this Paul is ready to die/ live & apply: dying for Christ, and praying to prepare)

c example: from my life (Stephen Fry introduction) “I want to tell you about a little incident in my life. You may have read..” to die is gain. apply not just to extreme situations, but every day..

d examples: fruitful labour in prison

Bunyan Pilgrims Progress & Reading to London..

Richard Wurmbrant

– Look how God uses chains! – rejoice in this!

But not just whilst in prison, its wherever we are, we can be used for fruitful labour. It is the believers **everyday stance** for the believer – whatever happens.. (that's the final section: whatever happens)

3. The advance of the gospel in the church - 27-30

Paul then addresses the Philippians

And you – whatever happens to you..

worthy of Christ – 'citizenship'

1. the future is uncertain

- whether I come or not
- whether trials increase e.t.c.

2. the future is also 'certain' in certain respects

- we will be saved (we share in God's grace)
- we are to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel – this is what it means to 'discern what is best'
- we are called to **stand firm** in one spirit – not to fear (as Paul in last section 'sufficient courage..') need courage as there are enemies of the faith, those who oppose us and our Lord (n.b. together '**one** spirit' '**one** man' – not being frightened: 'uncontrollable stampede of startled horses')
- enemies of Christ and his church will be destroyed (& warning)
- we will **suffer** for christ

3. Paul explains – what's going on in **suffering**

- suffering as a **sign**
 - suffering as a **privilege** / badge of honour "Blessed are you.."
- This is important for us to understand – what it means to follow Christ (n.b. the suffering as a result of standing firm not 'run of the mill fallen world suffering')

Whatever happens to us – as we **stand** for Christ, we will be a **sign**, and this will bring suffering, we need not fear

- we're all in this together (as the church united)
- we're in good company (Paul) 'the same struggle you saw I had'
- we're all simply following the pattern set out by Christ – as Paul will go on to show in **Philippians Chapter 2**

Jesus lived for others progress and joy – that was his heart beat, it is to be ours.

- together in the context of opposition and suffering. If we are living in Christ this is our call, in the midst of suffering, as it was for Christ.