

PHILIPPIANS – 2nd CD

II. PAUL'S REFLECTIONS ON IMPRISONMENT (Phil 1:12-26)

A. THE PRESENT - FOR THE ADVANCE OF THE GOSPEL.

Like most letters, an update on his circumstances. N.I.V. "What has happened to me."

Verses are full of "I" and "me" yet don't go into detail of his personal sufferings and problems.

(1) THE GOSPEL ADVANCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF PRISON (1:12-14)

- Motyer "The deceit, malpractice and vilification that surrounded him were beyond belief, yet he looks back and asserts that what happened to him had really served to advance the gospel."

False accusation, nearly lynched by mob, insult, shame, trial, shipwreck, arrived in Rome not as honoured apostle but prisoner.

- Fee " 'To advance the gospel' has been his lifelong passion."

Refusing self-pity, Paul described the effects of his chains (v13, 14, 17) not on himself but on others.

- Motyer "He did not see his suffering as an act of divine forgetfulness ('Why did God let this happen to me?'), nor as a dismissal from service ('I was looking forward to years of usefulness, and look at me!'), nor as the work of Satan ('I am afraid the devil has had his way this time'), but as the place of duty, the setting for service, the task appointed."
- Motyer "He did not use the occasion of suffering either to turn his thoughts in upon himself or to make himself the object of other people's attention and interest. These verses (13-14), with their common foundation in the words 'my imprisonment', are as outward-looking as any pair of verses in the New Testament."

a. Unbelievers

v 13 "The praetorian guard and everyone else knows I am in chains because of my relationship with Christ."

- Fee "Let him loose and he will turn the world upside down. Incarcerate him and he will turn Caesar's house upside down."

b. The brothers

v14 "Have become more confident in the Lord to speak."

(2) THE GOSPEL ADVANCES OUTSIDE OF PRISON - DESPITE ILL-WILL
(1:15-18)

v15 "Some preach Christ even from envy and rivalry."

Serious sins referred to in Romans 1:29, Galatians 5:20-21, 1 Timothy 6:4.

Nevertheless Paul sees their sinfulness as advancing the gospel.

- Fee "Paul can write things like this because, first, his theology is in good order. He has learned by the grace of God to see everything from the divine perspective. This is not wishfulness, but deep conviction - that God had worked out his own divine intentions through the death and resurrection of Christ, and that by his Spirit he is carrying them out in the world through the church, and therefore through both himself and others. It is not that Paul is too heavenly minded to be in touch with reality, or that he sees things through rosy-tinted glasses. Rather, he sees everything in light of the bigger picture; and in that bigger picture, fully emblazoned on our screen at Calvary, there is nothing that does not fit, even if it means suffering and death on the way to resurrection. Such theology dominates this letter in every part; we should not be surprised that it surfaces at the outset, even in this brief narrative.

"Second, and related to the first, Paul is a man of a single passion: Christ and the gospel. Everything is to be seen and done in light of Christ. For him both life and death mean Christ. His is the passion of the single-minded person who has been 'apprehended by Christ,' as he will tell the Philippians in 3:12-14.

"Third, Paul's passion for Christ led him to an understanding of discipleship in which the disciple took up a cross to follow his Lord. Discipleship, therefore, meant 'to participate in the sufferings of Christ' (3:10-11), to be ready to be poured out as a drink offering in ministry for the sake of others (2:17). His imprisonment belongs to those trials for which 'we were destined' (1 Thess 3:3), and thus come as no surprise."

- Moule "If even a separatist propaganda will extend the knowledge of Him, his servant can rejoice."

B. THE FUTURE - FOR THE GLORY OF CHRIST AND THE GOOD OF THE PHILIPPIANS. (v19-26)

- Fee "The focus is on Christ; the orientation is eschatological."

(1) PAUL'S AMBITION - THAT CHRIST BE GLORIFIED (1:19-20)

- (a) v19 Paul anticipates his deliverance (or salvation).

Fee argues that the phrase is a "verbatim borrowing" from Job 13:16 (LXX) - carrying the idea of his "vindication" - i.e. that Paul will be finally vindicated before God. This being the result of his magnifying Christ in his body by life or death.

(Job's 'comforters' see his 'captivity' as being the result of hidden sin - but Job was vindicated.)

- (b) His dependence on their prayers (v19)

The 'supply' of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

- Motyer " 'Supply' has a 'plus' element in it; it is the 'full, sufficient supply'."

Not as NIV "the help given by the Spirit."

- Fee "That Paul here intends the Spirit as the 'supply' is confirmed by the almost identical usage in Gal 3:5, where it can only mean 'God supplies you with the Spirit...' he is not thinking of the Spirit's 'help' but of the gift of the Spirit himself."

Paul shows his inter-relationship with the church. He prays for them, but is also grateful for their prayers for him.

- Motyer "The two thoughts of intercession and supply are bound so closely together by Paul that we could without violence translate the Greek 'your prayers and the consequent supply...'"
- Fee "The grammar assumes the closest kind of relationship between their prayer and the supply of the Spirit."

- (c) His expectation (v20)

Paul's eager expectation and hope is:-

- (i) he shall not be put to shame in anything (cf Ps 34:4-5)
- (ii) with all boldness (i.e. outspokenness or plainness of speech)
- (iii) now as always (cf 2 Cor 4:10)
- (iv) in his body - i.e. physical life or death
- (v) Christ shall be magnified.

(2) THE DESIRED OUTCOME - TO BE WITH CHRIST (1:21-24)

v21 "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

Christ is Paul's magnificent obsession, the one he longs to know and for whom he is willing to lose all things.

- Fee " 'Christ', the name that sums up for Paul the whole range of his new relationship to God; personal devotion, commitment, service, the gospel, ministry, communion, inspiration, everything."
- Fee "Likewise, if Paul is executed, that means the goal of 'living' has thus been reached; he will have 'gained' Christ."

(a) This is not a death wish nor a desire to be done with life.

(b) He can speak positively about the "gain" through death because of his absolute devotion to Christ in life.

(c) Contrast the tragic, empty 'hopes' of suicide pilots on September 11th.

v22 Living means fruitful labour.

Paul's expectation was that if I live I bear fruit. (No "if's" or "buts"!)

v23 If he had a choice, Paul would choose execution.

- 'desire to depart....very much better'

- Fee "A remarkable compound of superlatives - little question where Paul's sympathies lie."

Not to be compared with Hamlet's soliloquy

Paul had a yearning to gain the prize (3:14).

- Fee "Although apparently reflecting on 'life' or 'death' in the abstract, in reality he is pondering what it would mean for him to be either released or executed.....eschatological yearning should not be interpreted as an 'existential dilemma!'"

v24 Paul was happy to remain 'for your sake'.

(3) THE EXPECTED OUTCOME - REUNION IN PHILIPPI (1:25-26)

- v25 Paul's conviction is that he will remain. Makes it clear that the previous passage does not represent Paul having a deep inward struggle.
- for their progress and joy. (Joy characterises the letter - see 1:4,18)
- v26 NASB "Your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus.."
- literally 'your grounds for glorying will overflow in Christ Jesus in me.'
- Vincent "The conjunction of the two phrases 'in Christ, in me' is somewhat confusing. Paul's presence is the immediate cause of their Christian joy; hence 'in me', but their rejoicing in Paul is 'in Christ' - a joy evolved in the sphere of life in Christ."
 - see also 2 Cor 5:12, 2 Cor 7:4, 2 Cor 1:14, Phil 2:16.

CONCLUSION

Paul's personal passion for Christ shines through the passage, as does his love for the church at Philippi and his willingness to allow their needs to determine his life, death and *raison d'être*.