

The Advance of the Gospel
Philippians 1:12-18

1. Read Philippians 1:12-18 twice. Write down any key ideas or phrases that catch your attention. What are the key principles you believe we ought to draw from this text? Why did you choose those principles?

2. What is Paul talking about when he refers to “what has happened” to him in verse 12? What larger purpose does he give for his present situation?

3. What does it mean to “advance the gospel” (v. 12)? What is the “gospel” Paul is referring to (Read John 3:16; Romans 1:1-5, 16-17; 5:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:1-9; 2 Cor. 5:16-21 to help you better answer the question.)

Gospel literally means, “good news.” Based on these verses, what are the *key elements* of that good news you would want to share with another person to help advance it?

4. Read Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28. How do these texts relate to Paul’s words in verse 12?

5. According to verse 13, how was the gospel being advanced during Paul’s imprisonment? What group(s) of people did Paul single out as coming to know the gospel because of his circumstances? Using a little speculation, how do you think Paul was using his time during his imprisonment? What does that say about the Apostle? (Hint: skim through the Book of Acts to help you answer this question.)

6. It is interesting to note that these “brothers” Paul refers to are not ordained clergy; they are laypeople. How did most of these people respond to Paul’s imprisonment (v. 14)? What was it about Paul’s situation that produced that sort of “confidence in the Lord” in the lives of others? Share a time you have been emboldened in your faith because of the faithfulness of another person.

Read Ephesians 4:11-16. How are the “brothers” of Philippians 1:14 putting into practice the teaching of Ephesians 4:11-16? What are the key principles of the Ephesians text and how can today’s church more faithfully live them out?

7. Based on verses 15-18, what was the “word of God” the “brothers” (laypeople) spoke (preached and taught)? In other words, what was their central message? In what ways can the church today get distracted from that central message? How can the church regain her focus during those distractions?

8. What were the contrasting motivations of those who were preaching Christ, based on verses 15-18?

Paul does not dispute the *message* being preached, so we are safe in assuming both parties were preaching sound doctrine. But clearly their *motivations* were very different. Why would some have negative motives for preaching Christ? What would that look like in the church today? Do these different motives for preaching Christ really matter, as long as the true message is communicated? Why?

9. What was Paul’s response to those who preached Christ out of less-than-noble motives (v. 18)? How was he able to have that attitude, especially since those ungodly motives were personal attacks against him?

How do *you* usually respond to those who treat you poorly? Why?

10. Paul said he was imprisoned for “the defense of the gospel” (v. 16)? He was there because of the gospel and would have the opportunity to make a case for it. While *we* may not be imprisoned for *our* faith, what are some ways Christians today can faithfully make a case for the gospel when they are under scrutiny and attack?

Walking Points

11. Share a time when you found yourself in a bad situation but discovered later that God used it for good. At the time of the experience were you able to see how God would use it for good? If not, how long did it take? What enabled you to see how God was working in your circumstances and to trust him during that troublesome situation?

12. Paul's circumstances did not hinder his faithful boldness. What sorts of circumstances hinder *your* faithful boldness in sharing the gospel with others? Why? What are three things you can start doing today to overcome those obstacles?

13. What would a Christ-honoring, eternal perspective look like when you face persecution because of your faith in Christ? Besides Paul, what other examples or teachings in Scripture support your view? Name two or three ways you can best cultivate that perspective in your life?

14. Can you share an example of how you were encouraged to be faithful because of the tough circumstances someone else was going through? What sorts of "fears" of "speaking the word" would the Christians in Paul's world have had? Were those fears legitimate? What sorts of fears of speaking the word do Christians in our city have? Are those fears legitimate? Explain.