

Pressing on toward the goal – Week Two
Further Reflection and discussion material – Philippians 1:12-30

The challenge of Missional Living.

Background:

1. In the introductory verses of chapter 1 (vs 1-11), Paul not only assured the Philippian believers of his thankfulness to God for their partnership in the gospel but also tells them what it is that he prays for them; namely that they would be able to discern what is best and that they may be pure and blameless. They become key in what Paul goes on to encourage the Philippian believers with, as they learn from his personal experience and as Paul exhorts them to keep focused on the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Of note in this introduction is Paul's mention of the significance of knowledge and depth of insight in the context of love - 'agape'. Walter Hansen¹ makes a number of helpful comments;
 - a. 'agape' is the word that Paul uses for love and in the context, it is clear that the love that is being prayed for is a love that is 'self-giving'; it's the love that God has for his people that resulted in the 'gospel' of Jesus Christ.
 - b. The focus of this 'agape' in this passage is 'one another'
 - c. Paul uses for 'knowledge' in this verse is a compound word that is best translated 'full knowledge' – Hansen points out that this transcendent and moral knowledge, as used by Paul in his letters, 'is recognition of the will of God that is effective in the conduct of one who knows God. Intellectual understanding and existential recognition belong together.'
 - d. Paul adds the phrase 'insight' into the mix – it denotes moral understanding for insight guides the actions and words of those who are wise.
 - i. Considering the above four points, *what 'picture' are you beginning to see about the significance of who we are as God's missionary people and what it means for us in our lives and relationships?*

The Challenge of Missional Living:

In the sermon on this passage², Drew highlighted three reminders that stem from Paul's focus on the gospel of Jesus Christ. Of significance however is the integrated way in which Paul discusses these three contributions;

- A. The life of a missional disciple of Jesus Christ is all about 'advancing the gospel'
- B. Missional Living involves all of one's life.
- C. Missional Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ presents us with the challenge of living in a way that commends the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The synergy is crucial and he demonstrates this reality in the way in which he *'tells the story'*.

¹ Hansen, W. The letter to the Philippians (Nottingham, APOLLOS, 2009) p 58-59

² <https://www.gwac.org.au/sermons> Sunday morning 9th July 2017

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He starts by reminding the readers that all that is going on in his life now,

- is serving to advance the gospel (vs 12),
- then grounds his first comment by demonstrating that it is all of his life, what is done in the flesh and in his body, that advances the gospel (vs 22) and
- concludes with the exhortation for the church in Philippi to follow his lead and live missionally for the cause of the gospel by ensuring that they do nothing that will bring the gospel into disrepute (vs 27) –

It's all one big integrated 'missional living' paradigm.

Looking a little deeper:

1. Although Paul only gives a brief description of what the 'gospel' is, in the Philippians text (2:11 – Jesus Christ is Lord), he gives a clear 'of first importance' account of what the 'gospel' is, in his thinking and writing: See 1 Cor 15:1-5.
 - a. Take some time to read this passage and then write out what it is that Paul means by gospel – being careful not to add things from your own story or memory of what others have said. Its important to appreciate what Paul says the gospel is.
 - b. A helpful clarification that has been made by a number of commentators over the years is 'the gospel is good news, not good advice' – this reminds us that the 'gospel' is about what God has done and is doing in Christ – its all about Jesus.
2. As a result of the advance of the gospel (1:12) two things are directly occurring:
 - a. People now know the good news about Christ Jesus – King Jesus (vs 13)
 - b. Other believers are embolden to 'speak the Word' (vs 14)
 - i. Can you remember a time when the activity of another Christian has given you boldness or courage to be active in your gospeling the gospel? (your announcing or giving witness to the good news about King Jesus)

Next week Ben will focus on the great 'song of Christ' detailed in Philippians 2:1-11

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3. In verses 15-18, Paul looks at the importance of preaching Christ – and he makes it clear that when disciples of Jesus are doing gospel ministry, the key thing is that Christ is preached. He is not fussed about what specific agenda might motivate the ones doing the ‘gospeling’. Paul is NOT saying that it does not matter how the ‘gospel worker’ lives their life (that is made clear in vs 27ff); rather he is acknowledging that people will have different motives from time to time but if their core intent is to make known the good news about God’s redemptive purpose, seen in Christ, then ‘I rejoice in this’(vs 18)

4. LOOK at what Paul says in verse 21 “For me, To Live – Christ, to die – gain”
 - a. The personal pronoun at the beginning of this sentence emphasizes the deeply personal nature of the statement that follows; ‘This is me, its who I am’. And Paul is saying “I am all about Jesus”.
 - b. The absence of the verb in this sentence is significant – ‘For me, to live – Christ’ leaves open ALL the possibilities; For me to live, honours Christ, depends on Christ, means Christ. Put simply, Paul has left aside self, and life IS all about Jesus Christ
 - i. What is God saying to you in this?

 - ii. Is there something particular that you sense or feel God is prompting you about or calling you into?

 - c. To die – gain. Again, there is no verb yet in the context, Paul is saying that there is a gain in death and it’s the same as the previous one – its Christ. This is not about rescue from suffering however; the gain is that in his (potential) death, Christ is made known. This is clarified for us in verse 20 and in 22; I bear witness to Christ in my body, in my life, whether living or dead.
 - i. How are you ‘being a witness to Jesus in your body, in your life?

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5. In verse 27, Paul exhorts the church in Philippi conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. Throughout this letter, he does not impose a list of rules; rather he presents the person of Christ and in so doing he is saying that the 'rule' for how this community of faith is to live is Jesus Christ, King Jesus himself. "The gospel of Christ provides the motive and pattern for all Christian behavior."³
- a. Specifically, the text is "...be citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" – often translated "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel" there is some discussion as to whether the citizenship spoken of is to be interpreted as heavenly, (given what Paul writes in 3:20) or Roman citizenship, therefore referring to what they do as citizens in the city.
 - b. In the context, Roman citizenship seems preferable. When Paul writes that he wants Christ to be exalted in **his body** (20) and in **his flesh** (22,24), he is declaring that **our everyday lives**, in word and deed, declare the gospel; the news of God's redemptive purpose.
 - i. Think about this important consideration and reflect on what it might mean for you to live your life as a disciple of King Jesus AND as a citizen YOUR community. If you are in a group discussion, share your reflection.
 - ii. The flow of the sentence that Paul writes means that your citizenship and your discipleship are interwoven; what added intensity and challenge does this knowledge provide.

³ Hansen, p94