

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 10, Advancement of the Gospel, Philippians 1

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This is Dr. Dan Darko and his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 10, Advancement of the Gospel, Philippians 1.

Welcome back to the biblical studies lecture series. We have been looking at Philippians and have covered the introduction and chapter 1 from verses 1 to 11. If you remember the end of the last lecture on Philippians, I introduced you to the structure of Philippians, especially as you see, as I showed you, I tried to show you here.

This structure is generally seen as an overview, and I tried to highlight a few things. It may interest you to start thinking about Paul and his imprisonment in Rome in the light of what I tried to show you at the end of the last lecture. Paul's whole calling is to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to many parts of the world.

In fact, he claims and writes with a high degree of confidence that he has been called to communicate the gospel to Gentiles. It was in the course of the spread of this gospel that he was arrested. If you remember your studies of the book of Acts or your personal reading of the book of Acts, you may have come across a session where Paul ran into trouble for spreading the gospel, and he was put in jail, and he was actually ready to be scourged.

Now, going back to the beginning of Philippians, you may recall that I mentioned that part of the right of being a Roman citizen is that you cannot be scourged. Paul was very clever in invoking that right, that, in fact, he himself was a Roman citizen. And that introduced a whole new realm into the debate because if he was under trial and now just about to be punished, invoked Roman citizenship, then there is something here.

He's appealing to be heard before Caesar, and that is what is going to bring Paul to Rome and cause him to experience imprisonment or house arrest. All that was meant to stop Paul from spreading the gospel. In the passages that we'll be looking at from verse 12 to verse 26 in particular, you will see how this is playing out in Philippians.

Paul is going to say, you know what? If the intended aim is to stop the spread of the gospel, guess what? It didn't work out. Even in imprisonment, the gospel will still be made known. Nothing can hinder the power of the gospel.

He would draw the reader's attention to the fact that, yes, imprisonment imposes suffering, but for suffering for the cause of Christ, they must be aware that it is a

worthy cause. It is in that vein Paul will introduce suitable models for the church in Philippi. I mentioned in the introduction of this lecture that in Philippi, they were anticipating or brooding rumors about the fact that there might be some Jewish evangelist who may come in with some concept to undermine Paul's gospel.

But within the Philippi contest itself as a Roman colony, they were under constant pressure from the jurisprudence of the Romans, all the pressure of Roman citizenship, the pride of the national system, the emergence and the influence of Roman activities in town, and how they will use that to suppress that, particularly in the first century. If you remember your history a little bit, I should say it is in church history, or if you don't know it, let me draw your attention to that. Around this time of the Roman Empire, we are beginning to see a trend where Caesar is beginning to see himself as a form of deity that people should worship and honor in power and authority.

Later in Christianity, the early church faced this persecution, asking if you say Caesar is Lord or if you would say Jesus is Lord. And those two lines are all that you need to be free or persecuted. And so imagine all these pressures coming, and the emperor worship is now in Philippi.

Christians were under pressure. Paul wanted them to know that there are suitable models who have gone through suffering and have seen and shown grace in suffering. That pressure and suffering should not stop and will not stop those who have been called to the work of God.

I was just about to introduce you to a big word, mimesis, which is an ancient device that tries to appeal to a leader or a suitable figure as a good model for people to follow. And we'll see it playing out in Philippians, particularly in Philippians chapter two and chapter three; we are going to see how Paul is using all this to convey the message. Paul does not want the church to be afraid that his imprisonment is hindering or hampering the work of God.

He doesn't want them to come into a situation where they are sitting back and saying, Oh, poor Paul. He came to Philippi trying to convey the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ and got arrested with Silas. He suffered a great deal right here, and now he's in jail.

The gospel is going to stop. No, Paul wants to mitigate those fears and let them know that, indeed, imprisonment has not actually hampered the spread of the gospel. One British scholar, F. F. Bruce, liked to put it this way in his commentary on Philippians.

He, Paul, was a distinguished prisoner, a Roman citizen, exercising his prerogative to have his case heard by the emperor and made sure that everyone who came in touch with him knew that it was on account of the gospel that he was under house arrest

and not because of subversive political activity or criminal conduct. On that note, Paul is going to try to establish with a high degree of clarity in the verses we are going to be looking at soon that, hey, he is in prison for the gospel. And if anyone thought the gospel would be imprisoned because he is in prison, they were fooling themselves.

That would not work. So, let's look at Philippians chapter 1 from verses 12 to 18. And Paul writes, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest of my imprisonment is for Christ.

And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

The former proclaims Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed. And is that I rejoice.

Wow. So, let's take a quick look at how Paul links his imprisonment to the power of the gospel, establishing with that clarity that the gospel had not been imprisoned. Paul says his imprisonment is rather advancing the gospel.

Put in different ways, prison walls have not hindered the progress of the gospel. In fact, the prison guards and everyone else know why he is in prison. This is, in effect, what Paul is saying in verse 12.

Being in prison gave him the opportunity to explain why Jesus Christ came into the world, why he found himself in prison, and perhaps an opportunity to retell the story about what happened to him on the road to Damascus. A first-class educated young man from Tarsus, having the privilege to be educated under Rabbi Gamaliel in Jerusalem, exercising the highest form of discipline in Jewish movements called the Pharisees. As a Pharisee, he was not an ordinary one, one committed to persecuting the church and stopping the gospel from advancing.

He came into contact with Jesus Christ of Nazareth on the way to Damascus. That turned his life and gave him a new mission, a mission to proclaim Jesus Christ to the world, specifically and more so to Gentiles. Paul said his imprisonment had now given him the opportunity to tell the prison guards and those around that, indeed, Jesus came to save the world.

Among him, he is one. He was once a persecutor, and just in case they thought they were doing their job, Paul used to do that kind of job, too, to try to stop the gospel from advancing. The gospel has not been stopped.

It could not be stopped by Paul, and Roman imprisonment had not stopped it. It is advancing, and Paul says the prison guards around him and everyone else has had the opportunity to hear him. Wow.

Paul goes on to explain his imprisonment: if it was meant to actually deter people or to create a high degree of fear among the brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ about their calling and their mission to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, it could not do that. In fact, his imprisonment has rather inspired him. Let me give you a more modern illustration.

We have all heard about Al-Qaeda. We have heard about Al-Qaeda, And I could not disagree with their position stronger. The Islamic fundamentalist movements have actually caused more harm to our world, and it is something we should be deploying and deploying and doing everything to put to stop.

But let me tell you what is happening here. You see Al-Qaeda, in today's terms, in today's terrorist terms, has come to realize that the more they cause violence, the more they inspire their sympathizers, and the more they get people involved to follow their cause. It is sad to the extent that in Africa, as we go through these lectures in this very moment, we have girls kidnapped by Al-Qaeda affiliate Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria.

But think about that kind of activity and think about the positive counterpart of it. Paul's imprisonment, instead of creating fear in people, is now emboldening the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ about what they have believed, and it is creating more passion for them to go and spread the gospel. More will be ready to die for Christ.

More will be ready to be imprisoned for Christ. Paul is going through that. It's a worthy cause.

It is something to believe in and something to hold on to. The imprisonment has emboldened believers to preach. Look at your test again, fearlessly, all boldly.

Wow. Wow. Look at what has happened now.

Paul is going to state something else relating to his imprisonment. It is great to know what his imprisonment is bringing about, but it is also good to know that, in fact, his imprisonment has not stopped the advancement of the gospel. While he is in prison,

people have been emboldened to preach Christ, and as I will show you in a few minutes in verse 15, some are even going to preach out of selfish motives.

Paul will say again and a second time that they still preach Christ, and he will tell us his conclusion. Wow. Before we get back to the central core of what is going on in verses 12 to 18a, let me try to clarify something about the language that is used in verse 13.

I want you to know, brothers, in verse 12, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. Verse 13 goes like this, so it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard. That word imperial guard, hold on to that thought and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

The word translated imperial guard is the Greek word mouthful word praetorium. This is a word that doesn't appear a whole, whole lot in the New Testament. It appears in a few areas, but this word, as used here, is a debated matter in scholarship.

So, depending upon the translation you are using at the moment, you will see that some will translate it as if it refers to a place, and some will translate it as if it refers to a military force. What goes into deciding how you interpret that word? Now, if you say, if you translate it to mean his imprisonment has actually allowed him to spread the gospel in the governor's palace, praetorium, then you'll say his imprisonment gave you the opportunity to spread the gospel in the geographical setting. But if you translate or understand it to be referring to imperial guards, then you are dealing with a specific group.

So let me give you the various views on this. Praetorium, or the word used here, appears elsewhere in the New Testament and specifically in Mark 15 verse 6 in John 18:28, John 18:33, and Acts 23:35; the word is used to refer to a governor's residence. In the gospels, you'll see more so referring to Pilate's residence.

The word can also refer to the emperor's bodyguards or the place where the bodyguards reside, like the barracks near the governor's mansion. What is going on here, though, when we look at the context, the third meaning or usage of the word in antiquity seems to be showing up here, referring to a specific group, an elite military force that actually guards the governor's or the emperor's mansion. You want to know that this elite group that guards the emperor's palace is actually such a highly skilled elite group that they change their shifts every four hours.

You may want to ask every four hours, why? Now, I'm glad you asked that. Let me try to explain that to you. And maybe I should bring it home so that you can actually think through and follow this well.

I don't know this for a fact, but someone was telling me that some of the sniffing dogs for drugs actually work for about one hour, and they can be so exhausted that you have to take them away and help them to recover and bring them back another day. In other words, they are trained for a highly minute, detailed job, and they're able to work for just an hour. Now, for the imperial elite, the reason they are put there for an hour, for four hours at a time, excuse me, is that they need to be alert and awake, and that is the time that they can keep their attention with alertness.

Now, if you have been in London and have gone to Buckingham Palace or some of these places that have the British guys standing there, sometimes they are standing there, and they look like statues. They are not moving an inch. It requires a high degree of concentration and effort, but you're able to keep that just for a certain time, and so that is why the changing of the guards happens.

For the imperial elite troops, four hours is the maximum they can survive with the high degree of intelligence, aptitude, and awareness that is required of them. Now, Paul may then be getting an opportunity to have these guys guarding his prison because, guess what? Every four hours, there is an audience for a sermon. Every pastor will like that.

They will change, and they will get into conversation, and he'll say, so what brings you here? And this highly educated Christian leader gets to tell them the simplicity of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Paul's own words, great things are happening because of his imprisonment. The gospel is not imprisoned.

Christians in Philippi, don't worry about me. The gospel is advancing despite my imprisonment. Hansen, in his commentary on Philippians, writes that Paul's reference to the palace guard points to the most elite group of Roman soldiers who served as a special bodyguard for Caesar.

Sorry for my spelling down. This group of 9,000 elite soldiers sometimes exerted control over Caesar himself. In fact, they deposed and promoted Caesar.

After the assassination of Caligula, or what you may know as Emperor of Augustine, they put Claudius on the throne. Later, they guided the directions of Nero's reign. But Caesar's bodyguard could not intimidate Paul.

He set a higher power than Caesar or Caesar's bodyguard. He was an agent of the one whom God had exalted to receive universal worship as Lord. He is, and he was an agent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul has not stopped talking. He has not compromised his position about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As James Montgomery will put it further, Paul's words about

the spread of the gospel through suffering revealed the effect of his life upon non-Christians and upon believers.

And believers were emboldened to preach the gospel. All of this is encouraging, but there is one more thing to be said. If these things are true in your life, you must let suffering draw you closer to the Lord.

It can do the opposite. It can draw you away. It can embitter your heart and produce a complainer in you where there should be a victorious Christian.

In other words, if Paul had had the courage, excitement, and joy in jail, as he would state even in this passage, I would have rejoiced over this. If he had all that excitement, then James was asking, James Montgomery, what would be our demeanor and our attitude if we, as Christians, found ourselves in the face of suffering? His suggestion, even before I go on to Philippians, is suffering has a way of strengthening, emboldening, and empowering us to be better Christians. Or it has a way to crush us and to make us crumble on the inside and move away from God.

We may learn something from Paul here for a moment. Suffering for the Christian, though prison walls may be around, though he may see physical guards around him ensuring that he's kept all confined, he is not discouraged. He does not feel hopeless, and he does not feel that God has abandoned him.

If I have heard it once said, peace with God is not the absence of conflict but the presence of God with you in the situation. Perhaps you may think about what God, Paul, is making out of his imprisonment and ask, what am I making out of my difficult circumstances as I may see it? Let me refresh your memory on what Philippians chapter 1, verses 12 to 14, has been saying as I try to explain. Paul writes, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

And note what I mark there for you. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Note the reference of brothers two times in this passage, and then, when we go through chapter 2, notice how he referred to the children of God.

I mentioned in this lecture how sibling language is used, and fictive kinship is used by Paul to show solidarity and affection for one another. But think about what I marked there in the last line for you as we move on to discuss verse 15. Most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Note he refers to them as most of my brothers. And hold on to that thought because I will get back to that. Verse 15 reads, some proclaim Christ, that is most of my brothers, some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill.

These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel. The others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. What does it matter? Just this that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true.

And in that, I rejoice. Think about that. And then he ends by saying, yes, and I will continue to rejoice.

Is that what you rejoice over? Before we unpack this passage, let me show you something of a pattern about how the faithful and the unfaithful handled it. A very good colleague of mine put this structure in place in his commentary by the name Frank Tillman. Frank actually draws our attention to this grammatical structure pretty well, that Paul's friends preach Christ. But guess what? Paul's rivals preach Christ, too.

Paul's friends preach out of goodwill. Paul's rivals preach out of envy and rivalry. Paul's friends preach out of love.

Paul's rivals preach out of selfish ambition, not sincerely. Paul's friends know that Paul's rivals intend or are supposed to cause harm. You see, Paul's friends, they know that he had been put there for the defense of the gospel.

But what was the motive of Paul's rivals? They want to increase his suffering. They want to take advantage of his imprisonment. Think about this.

Think about being a senior pastor of a church, and for some reason, you fall sick. Or, for some reason, you had to be out of town for a long time. Or for some reason, or you made some bad decision and you're in trouble, so you had to be away for some time before you came back to the place.

And then some people behind said, let's carry on the good work he or she has left behind. And then others say, this is our opportunity. This is our opportunity to cut his legs, cut his neck, cut his shoulders before he or she shows up.

That was what Paul was experiencing. They are, actually. Paul uses the word ill will. They preach out of selfish ambition.

Let me draw your attention to the characteristics of these preachers. I reminded you earlier that Paul calls them brothers. Is that the kind of people you call brothers? Is that the kind of people you will love enough to say, you know what, they are

brothers in Christ Jesus? Or is that the kind of people that, if you were Paul, you would actually curse them? This is what Paul had to point out to us about them.

He refers to them as some brothers preach Christ. But without a doubt, they preach out of selfish motives. Paul does not want us to lose sight about one thing.

It is not about him. It is about Christ. They preach Christ.

Their motives are impure, but they preach Christ. If you were like me, then you had listened to one or two tele-evangelists preaching Christ and in between doing all kinds of gimmicks and using all kinds of manipulation tactics to the extent that you go, I want this person dead or out of there. If you were like me, you may have seen some Christian leaders doing things and showing things that clearly their motives could be questionable.

But they still tell about Jesus coming to die for the sinners. Paul says, I will not be the first to crush them, but make no mistake about this. It is not the same as the other opponents Paul encountered elsewhere who are trying to lead people away from Christ.

They, Paul, want to hand some of them over to Satan. I mean, if you give Paul a chance, he will deal with that in the harshest way possible. But for those who preach Christ and seem to be assuming self-motives, Paul says, they are still brothers and sisters in Christ.

They were driven by envy and rivalry. Let's look at those two words for a minute. They are envious of what other people are doing, and they want to project or impose themselves on others.

Envy drives them for how they stand and what they do in the name of Christ. They have a high degree and sense that they should be better than other people, or they are envious of what other people are doing. And look at the second word, rivalry.

We are recording these lectures in America. So let me tell you what we will call it in America. We'll call it competition, negative competition.

There is a sense of rivalry, perhaps thinking they are in some kind of competition with Paul and they have to win. Let me just remind you about something striking in Pauline theology. For Paul, life is not about competition.

For Paul, rivalry is unnecessary. For Paul, in his wider theology, each one of us is given specific gifts from God. And the gift that God has given us should be used to serve the body and the common good.

For Paul, none of us possess all the gifts. In fact, we need all of us to be a holistic whole that he will use the metaphor body to define. So just think about this.

For Paul, just in case the hand is trying to compete with the head, what would it look like? As you put it in 1 Corinthians 12. Rivalry is not important, but Paul is drawing our attention to the fact that his theological framework is that of love and fellowship and companionship and comradeship does not negate the fact that in the church of God, rivalry is present. But he will not call those who preach Christ and still exercise some degree of envy and rivalry enemies.

He will call them brothers. He will go on to say they are insincere. We are trying to take advantage of his imprisonment in Rome.

Putting it in my words, not Paul's words, maybe in their most recent meeting, said, this Paul guy, maybe they should kill him so that we can be there like the next Paul. This Paul guy is too famous. How come he's so famous and we are not? We want to be known like him, and we want to get his respect and authority.

Who is he? Who does he think he is? We have to be that. Well, think about how Paul qualifies these people and ask yourself, if you know people who preach Christ out of envy and rivalry and who are insincere, are they one of the first people you are going to meet and give a hug and say, wonderful brother, wonderful sister. I am glad we just met.

You are great. Let's spend some time together. Are you able to hold your breath and speak for 30 minutes without trying to correct fix or treat them like enemies? Paul says, hold on.

Think about the big picture. Sometimes preachers or Christians may have some negative traits, but if their core foundation and their core message is Christ and him crucified, give them time. That reminds me of an incident in the book of Acts when a preacher by the name of Apollos came in and preached a powerful sermon.

Apollos, in Acts 18, was such an eloquent figure. He had learned all the skills of Greek rhetoric that I was pointing you to earlier on in this lecture, and he spoke eloquently, Acts said, but he had such horrible theology. Priscilla and Aquila took him on the side, and they were able to gently help him.

The next time we heard about Apollos, he was actually a significant figure in Christianity whose name was mentioned in 1 Corinthians in a way that people thought they should follow him or Paul or Peter. Paul says some preach out of selfish ambition, but they preach Christ, grace. They preach Christ, and we should be able to reach out to them and treat them as brothers and sisters.

A friend of mine told a story recently talking about grace and issues in the church. He talks about a man who came to his church where he was pastoring and a man was very upset, and he asked him, are you the pastor of this church? And the friend said, for a second, I didn't know what to say because I didn't know if I said yes, he was going to beat me up or not. But then he said, I went ahead and said yes anyway.

He said, so you have my wife in your church? He said yes. Do you know my wife? My wife is this, my wife is that, and he began to list all kinds of horrible things about his wife. And the friend said the more he talked about horrible things about his wife, the more his smile became bigger.

He saw that the man was wondering what was going on, so he paused and asked him why. And a friend of mine said you don't understand. That is exactly the kind of people we want in our church because the church is not for perfect people.

The church is made up of people like her, and God is doing work in your lives. Wait and see as God works in the life of your wife. And if you see some good things, let's rejoice together.

Wow. Paul says some preach the gospel out of selfish motives, out of envy, and rivalry, insincerely.

They have self-ambitions. But he said, even because they preach Christ, for this, I rejoice. And he said, yes, with this, I continue to rejoice.

Wow. The church, as Paul explains, the composite of its constituents, is made up of sinners saved by grace. It is growing, striving, and doing everything they could to serve Christ.

Let us not be quick to throw away the baby with the bath water. It's one of those expressions I learned in America that sometimes I get it upside down. Let's think about where Christ is in a person's life.

And let's look at who is being glorified in the end. Let's look at what is directed towards us versus what is being promoted for the cause of Christ. And if something is directed towards us, that may not be all that positive.

But the wider picture is promoting Christ and the cause of Christ. Paul says, I rejoice. Could we rejoice if that happens? Paul is certain, as he indicates in verse 19, that through the prayers of his Philippians friends, through the help of the spirit of Jesus Christ, his imprisonment will result in salvation or deliverance.

I'll come back a little bit to touch on some of this here and there, but let me get you back to look at some of these expressions here. Perhaps we should look at the word salvation. Paul says his imprisonment will end in salvation.

He said at the end of verse 18, yes, and I'll rejoice. Verse 19: for I know that through your prayers and the help of the spirit of Jesus Christ, this will end out for my deliverance. The word in Greek is the word we translate for salvation.

So, the question in scholarship, and if you pick up commentary, maybe you are such a curious person. The fact that you are following our Biblical Studies series, I guess is that you are a curious individual, a Christian trying to learn and grow to become a better person. So, I am presuming that you may have come across some commentaries already.

If you go for the bigger commentaries, you'll be surprised about how many pages are devoted to explaining justice. What does the word salvation or deliverance refer to? When he says through their prayers and the help of the spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out to be salvation. Is he referring to his acquittal at the trial? That when he is put on trial, God will save him.

In fact, the word Soteria or salvation can actually have that connotation of being saved, to be free, to be released, to be delivered. Or is it a reference to vindication in the heavenly court? Another way of saying Paul is saying, I know that I know that I know that I know that as you are praying for me and the help of the spirit of Jesus Christ is at my disposal. I know that I know that I know that God will be glorified in me in the long run.

Most scholars debate between these two and spend a lot of pages trying to justify one or the other. But does the word refer to both? I find an explanation by a prominent New Testament scholar who retired not too long ago, Gordon Fee, in the way he explains it in his commentary on Philippians. He puts it this way.

This whole affair will turn out to be my ultimate salvation and present vindication. When through your prayers and the supply of the spirit of Christ, my earnest expectation and hope are realized at my trial. And not only am I not brought to shame, but in a very open way, Christ is magnified in every way.

Whether I am given life or sentenced to death, in Fee's paraphrase, Fee is saying the word can have both connotations. That as they pray for him and as the spirit of Christ helps him, he may be saved from jail.

But whether he is saved out of jail or not, he knows that there is hope. By the way, Paul does not talk about hope as if it is something that maybe, maybe not. It may happen, it may not.

No. For Paul, hope is concrete stuff in the future that he is waiting to take hold of. And he's saying, through their prayers and help, this may be his portion.

Paul will go on to express his ambition. In his ambition, he will express it with such joy. Have you thought about the fact that this man is writing from jail? And yet he writes in verse 20, as it is my eager expectation and hope, that I will not be at all ashamed.

But that, with full courage now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means a fruitful liver for me.

Yet, I am at a crossroads, and I cannot tell which I should choose. I am hard-pressed between the two. My desire is to depart, but he will go on to say, for your sake, I wish to hang around for a while.

For Paul, there is a clear sense of joy and certitude that the prayers will help in his salvation. And there is expectancy and hope that he will not dishonor Christ, but he will bring glory or honor to Christ in his body. Let me pause here to explain one major concept in ancient Mediterranean culture.

Honor and shame were a major part of the culture. There was what we call ascribed honor. Honor that is earned.

Ascribed honor is an honor that you are born into; you are born into a good family, a big family, and you have all these resources you inherit, and you are this honorable person. And then there is acquired honor, which is the kind of honor that you earn by doing something great and all that. All these are fused in the culture.

There's no such a great implication between the two necessarily, but honor and shame became such an important part of the ancient Mediterranean culture. To dishonor your battalion in the army is a no-no. To dishonor your father could lead to death.

Even today, we hear about honor killing in those parts of the world, where if a woman who is from a particular culture or religion marries a person within their family setting, it is not honorable to do so. The person dishonors the family. And to dishonor the family, death is okay. In fact, a man who would kill a daughter for marrying the wrong person to dishonor them actually has some degree of a badge of honor.

Children want to live to honor their parents. People want to live to be honored in society. Paul wants his experience to bring honor to the person who called him.

And he is hoping and praying that he will not bring shame to the name of Christ that he has been preaching. He will not bring public ridicule or embarrassment to the name of Christ. He wants him to be honored in his suffering.

Wow. Paul's desire. It is on this basis he articulates his desire with clarity.

For him, living or dying, he loses nothing. In fact, for him to live, he is referring to acquittal. In other words, if he goes through his trial and he is acquitted, that is great.

Well, if he is not and he is sentenced to death, that is great, too. Because his destiny is not hampered either way. In fact, if he lived, he would have the opportunity to continue the good work of the Lord Jesus Christ, which would have direct repercussions on the Philippian church.

If he dies, he goes to be with the Lord. He goes to a better place. He perhaps even receives the crown.

However, it is necessary for Paul to stay so that he may be more of a blessing to the Philippian church. Yes, you don't want to think he says this because he's a coward. You don't want to think Paul is putting some of these things forward because he doesn't want to die.

And of course, I don't want to die. But given where Paul was in prison, oh, death is a real option. And if you are in a bad situation in jail, sometimes you wish you could die.

But he said, let me read his own words for you. For me, in verse 21, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.

Yet, which shall I choose? I cannot tell. I am hard-pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ.

For that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith so that in me, you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus because of my coming to you.

Wow. Paul would like to leave; he would like to reunite with the Philippian church so that in the end, Christ, again, Christ, will be glorified. Let me just tell you a story that happened in my classroom, or I should say, in my teaching career in a university, perhaps about five years ago.

I was teaching Paul, and I was covering this part of Philippians on that day. There were about 16 or 18 students in the class. I saw one girl seated on the corner, sobbing and crying.

I was wondering what was going on, but I tried to be cool, professor, so I didn't interrupt. I didn't interfere. These students later came to my office right after class because I had asked her how she was doing, and she could talk to me if there was any way I could be of help.

She came to my office, teaching in a Catholic Jesuit university. I said, professor, I want to tell you something. On that day, she was planning to commit suicide.

Her friend had committed suicide. One of her relatives had committed suicide not too long ago. Her friend was so near to the time she was meeting me that she thought of all that she was going through; the next thing she could do herself on that day was to commit suicide.

She came to class, and she said, I heard you read those words: to live is Christ, to die is gain. I realized suddenly there is hope. It would be selfish on my part to take my life, but I just want you to know that I still have my concussion.

I have everything intact to kill myself. I need help. Let me give you a short version of this story.

The girl did not kill herself. She found hope in Christ. I am not even sure in my conversation with her.

Clearly, that day, she wasn't ready to give her life wholly to Christ Jesus, but in the word of God, she had found hope not to die. The power of the gospel manifests in many ways. Paul had shown us in this passage that, in fact, prison walls could not hold the gospel back.

If someone thought imprisoning Paul would imprison the gospel, they were wrong. While in jail, the prison guards got to know about Christ. While in jail, more people were emboldened to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the course of the spreading of the gospel, yes, some preached Christ out of selfish motives and all that, but Paul says, I rejoice.

Christ is preached. Here, he comes in and tells his story and thanks God for their prayers and the help of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all that the help of the Lord Jesus Christ had to give. For Paul to live is Christ.

To die is gain. The message of the gospel is real. The life-transforming power of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has not ceased.

It works, and the gates of hell cannot stop what God wants to do. Let me end this session with a quotation that will bring us slowly to the next phase. Moises Silva, in his commentary on Philippians, writes that in Philippians 1, 25 to 26, the apostle comforts the Philippians with a moving description of the purpose that will be served by his release.

Their progress in faith, their joy in that faith, their abounding glory in Christ through Paul. Paul had already spoken about the progress of the gospel in verse 12. Now, he focuses on Philippians' participation in the progress.

The advancement of the gospel, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, is moving on. Yes, we stand a major challenge in Western civilization, but let's make no mistake. Beyond the Western world, the power of the gospel is being seen.

Lives are being transformed. Nothing is holding back what God can do. Drug addicts are seeing their lives turn around, and they are being saved.

I have burned so many idols because fetish worshipers are giving their lives to Christ. Yes, prison could not stop Paul, and today, nothing could stop us if we were followers, faithful followers, and preachers of Christ. As we do so, let's remember that some may do so out of selfish motives.

Let's be patient with them. Let's show grace. Let's allow Christ to work in their lives, and in the end, he, Christ, will be glorified.

Again, thank you very much for following our course on biblical studies, and I hope that as we go through Philippians, you are not only conceptualizing this, you are internalizing them. You are beginning to see a new life that can be lived, a life full of glory and praise to the one we serve and call our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Again, thank you very much for following this.

This is Dr. Dan Darko and his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 10, Advancement of the Gospel, Philippians 1.