

# *Suffering for the Gospel and Enjoying Grace*

**Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:7-8, 12-21, 28-30**

## **Paul's Suffering For The Gospel**

Paul suffered for the gospel as shown by his reference to his bonds-his imprisonment. **(1:7,13,14,17)** This indicates clearly that the book of Philippians was written from prison.

Paul's imprisonment was due to the defense and confirmation of the gospel **(1:7)**. Paul was the one who stood the strongest against anything that perverted and distorted the gospel. His defense of the gospel was the reason for much of his sufferings. Paul confirmed the gospel by presenting all the revelations of God's mysteries concerning Christ and the church. In the writings of Paul, the two great mysteries - Christ as the mystery of God **(Col.2:2)** and the church as the mystery of Christ **(Eph.3:4)** - are unveiled. To be sure, his teaching and preaching were a confirmation of the gospel and of God's economy.

Paul's sufferings made an advancement for the gospel. **(1:12)** Paul was a pioneer cutting the way so that the church as the army of God could march on. He knew that his sufferings were preparing the way, even the highway, for the advancement of the gospel. Even we today are marching on the way cut by Paul in his sufferings for the gospel. Today there is no need for us to cut another highway, but there is the need to clear the one cut by Paul. **(Gal.1:8-9)**

Far from being a discouragement, Paul's imprisonment was an encouragement to the brothers to speak the word of God without fear. **(1:14)** May we all be stirred up to speak God's word.

Paul's suffering for the gospel also strengthened the brothers to suffer for Christ **(1:28-30)**.

1. He charges us not to be frightened in anything by the opposers. He says that this would be proof to them of destruction, but of our salvation.
2. Paul's strong example of suffering for Christ strengthened the brothers and made them willing to suffer for Him in carrying out God's economy on earth.
3. Paul says, "Because to you it has been given on behalf of Christ not only to believe into Him, but also to suffer on His behalf." **(1:29)** To believe into implies the organic union the believer has with Christ through believing. To suffer on behalf of Christ, after receiving Him and being made one with Him through believing is to participate in (or have fellowship of) His sufferings **(3:10)**, that we may experience and enjoy Him in His sufferings. This is to live Him and magnify Him in a situation that rejects and opposes Him.
4. Paul was a pattern set up by God's grace for His New Testament economy **(1:30; 1Tim.1:14-16)**. The New Testament believers should experience and enjoy Christ by living and magnifying Him as Paul did in his sufferings for Christ, that they may be partakers with him of grace.

## **Paul's Enjoyment Of Grace**

Paul was in bonds, but he was enjoying grace. **(1:7)** For Paul, prison was a place of feasting and not merely of suffering. Partaking of grace means sharing and enjoying the processed Triune God. By grace Paul endured all the sufferings for the gospel. Participating in this enjoyment of grace with Paul for the furtherance of the gospel, the Philippian believers were one with Paul both in his suffering and in the enjoyment of grace.

Paul experienced the inward parts of Christ. **(1:8)** Inward parts signifies inward affection, tender mercy and sympathy. Paul was one with Christ even in the tender inward parts, in longing after the saints. Grace is related to the inward parts of Christ. Paul partook of grace, for he longed after all the saints in the inward

parts of Christ. To enjoy Christ is to be one in Christ's inward parts. This refers not only to enjoyment, but also to living Christ. To live Christ is to abide in His inward parts and there to enjoy Him as grace.

Later in this chapter Paul speaks of magnifying Christ and living Christ. Experientially, to magnify Christ and to live Christ require that we remain in the inward parts of Christ, that is, to abide in Him. We need to be in His tender heart and delicate feelings. If we abide here, we shall enjoy Christ as grace and experience Him in a very practical way. As we experience Christ and enjoy Him as our grace, we shall be sustained in suffering for the gospel by caring for the accomplishment of God's economy on earth today.

### **Preaching Christ Out Of An Impure Motive Or Out Of A Pure Motive**

Some preached Christ out of good will. These were the ones who had fellowship, participation, in the preaching of the gospel with Paul and worked together with him for the defense of the gospel, preaching Christ out of love. (1:15b-16) Other Christians opposed Paul and his ministry (1:15a, 17; 2Cor.10:7; 11:22-23). There were some who preached the gospel from envy of Paul's influence and in strife with him.(1:17) Those who announced Christ out of rivalry endeavored to make Paul's bonds press him more heavily by depreciating him and his ministry while he was laid aside outwardly from his preaching. Paul's affliction in bonds was not mainly due to his preaching of the gospel, but to his defense of the gospel. (Acts 21:27-36).

Paul's preaching of Christ included fellowship(1:5), defense & confirmation(1:7), advancement(1:12), and faith(1:27). But when the Judaistic believers preached Christ, they preached Him in an altogether different way. Instead of preaching Christ in the way of fellowship, they preached Him because of envy. Instead of preaching Christ in a way to defend the gospel, they did so because of strife. Yes, the Judaistic believers did preach Christ, but their preaching was not for the confirmation of the gospel. On the contrary, they preached Christ out of rivalry, out of faction and selfish ambition. Instead of all the positive aspects of the gospel, there were envy, strife, and rivalry. Such a preaching of the gospel did not cause the advancement of the gospel.

Although all [genuine] Christians believe in the same Lord Jesus, worship the same God, teach the same Bible, and preach the gospel, they may have different ways of preaching Christ. Even in the first century there were different ways of preaching Christ. Both Paul and the Judaistic believers preached Christ, but in their preaching of Him they were very different. (1:15-17) Because there are different ways of preaching Christ, we need knowledge and discernment. (1:9). Christians all over the world are preaching Christ. However, we should not think that simply because all are preaching the same Christ, everything is fine. We need to realize that there are different ways of preaching Christ and discern between them.

### **Paul's Rejoicing In Both Kinds Of Preachings Turning Out To Salvation For The Him**

Paul's heart was so broadened by grace that he even rejoiced in his opposing ones' preaching of Christ in pretense. (1:18) What an upright spirit is this! This is the outworking of the life, nature, and mind of Christ who lived in him. His experience of Christ was an enjoyment. Such a life rejoices no matter what the circumstances may be.

Paul realized that both ways of preaching Christ would turn out to salvation, that is, Paul would be sustained and strengthened to magnify Christ and to live Him. (1:19) Circumstances, in which Paul found himself, forced him to experience Christ and enjoy Him in a fuller way through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. In Paul's experience God's salvation was carried out to the uttermost. The experience of such a salvation is altogether related to the enjoyment of Christ and the experience of Christ.

Paul's circumstances also encouraged him to live Christ and to magnify Christ. Paul utilized the situations caused by the different preachings of the gospel to experience Christ, to live Christ, and to magnify Christ. Our situation is the same today. On the one hand, we cannot agree with certain ways in which Christ is preached; on the other hand, we must learn to be happy with the fact that Christ is being proclaimed. If this is our attitude, then the abnormal situation brought about by the different preachings of Christ will become an incentive for us to enjoy Christ, to live Him, and to magnify Him, as Paul did.