

Paul's Passion

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Let's turn in our Bibles now to Paul's epistle to the Philippians in chapter 1. Philippians chapter 1, we'll begin reading in verse 9 and read through the first part of verse 18.

Would you stand together with me for the reading of God's Word from Philippians chapter 1, beginning in verse 9. And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best, and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, through the glory and praise of God.

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the Word of God more courageously and fearlessly. It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.

The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the Gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

[1:34] But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. What is your passion in life?

We're talking now about the main thing. The thing that monopolizes your mind, that your mind keeps coming back to. The thing you want more than anything else. Your pursuit in life.

The late Dr. Francis Schaeffer identified the great pursuit of most in the West as being personal peace and affluence.

Personal peace. We want ease and rest. A life void of suffering and pain and trouble. And we want affluence.

The toys to go along with it. And as long as I have this, then I'm happy. Life is worth living. It's a very selfish orientation to life.

[2:37] And yet it's the reality. People are passionate about themselves. Well, the Apostle Paul used to be just like that. But he met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus.

And his passion in life was forever changed. He got a new heart. And that heart beat in sync with the passion of Jesus Christ.

And the passion that drove the Apostle Paul was the advancement of Christ's Gospel. The advancement of the Gospel. To see the good news of Jesus Christ proclaimed more widely.

With more people believing it. And you can't read long in any of Paul's letters before you bump into this passion.

We certainly see it again in our text today. And as we see it, may the Lord Jesus Himself draw near and make His passion to become more and more our passion.

[3:44] The letter to the Philippians. The saints in Philippi had heard that Paul had been imprisoned in Rome. Some 800 miles away.

And so they sent Epaphroditus to take a gift to him. To care for his needs and to check on him. To see how he's doing. They're rightly concerned for the Apostle.

Through whom they had come to believe in Jesus. And so he writes back to them. And now we come to the body of his letter. And the first thing that he says in verse 12 is, Now I want you to know, brothers, you've written, or you've sent Epaphroditus to find out about me.

Well, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel. As if to say right up front, it's not about me.

But it's about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The important thing is not at all how I'm doing, but how the Gospel is faring. And I am glad to say that the Gospel is advancing here in Rome.

[4:50] Now that's probably not what the Philippian believers were expecting to hear him say. If they were anything like us, and they were, they were probably thinking, you know, the Gospel cause has suffered a major setback.

After all, the chief spokesman, Paul, is in prison. He's been sidelined. This can't be good for us. For the cause of the Gospel. It's what we feel when the star player on the basketball team fouls out and there's still five minutes to play. This can't be good for the team.

The Apostle Paul in prison. But Paul assures them otherwise. I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has rather, is how the text could be read.

Not just really, but it has rather. This is something contrary to what you're thinking. It has rather served to advance the Gospel. The Gospel chariot's going forward, not backwards.

[6:00] It's progressing. It's invading new territory, staking out new claims for the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Now, it's important to see that Paul does not merely say that the Gospel had advanced in spite of his imprisonment.

It's not what he says. He says, the Gospel has advanced because of my imprisonment. Through my imprisonment.

That his imprisonment, rather than hindering the Gospel as his enemies had hoped, had actually become the means used for furthering the Gospel. It's true that Satan is out to hinder the Gospel. Like an enemy would try to hinder the progress of the oncoming army of an enemy, they go out and they cut down trees and let them fall across the path and roll huge boulders out onto the road to slow down the machinery of this oncoming army.

So the devil, the enemies on earth of the Gospel, threw out all kinds of obstacles for the Gospel.

[7:13] They put Paul in prison. But our mighty Captain Jesus Christ uses those very obstacles to advance his cause rather than to allow it to be hindered.

He makes the weapons forged against the Gospel to actually serve its advance. And so, all those obstacles thrown in the way, Jesus turns into stepping stones for the Gospel to be furthered.

So, we're going to silence the Gospel in Bedford and they throw John Bunyan into prison. And God says, that's just where I want him to write Pilgrim's Progress.

And that work will far out reach his life and Bedford and will bring the Gospel to the ends of the world for centuries yet to come.

Indeed, John Bunyan's imprisonment served to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

[8:18] Our Lord does make the wrath of men to praise Him. Now, we've got to ask, how? How did that happen? How did Paul's imprisonment actually work toward the advancement of the Gospel?

Well, there's two ways. One was in sinners and the other was in saints. First of all, many sinners heard the Gospel who otherwise wouldn't have.

Many sinners heard the Gospel that otherwise wouldn't have. Verse 13, As a result of my imprisonment, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

Imprisonment brought the mighty Gospel to a new group of sinners. the palace guard, the Praetorian guard, a corps of elite soldiers stationed in Rome, the bodyguards for Caesar, Nero, and his household, and all his concerns there in the capital city of Rome, including their prisons there. These were the toughest of the tough. The Praetorian guards. And there were some 9,000 of them stationed in Rome, history tells us.

[9:38] And God's way to get the Gospel to them is to throw His Apostle Paul into their prison. How's that for evangelism? For prison ministry.

And so here, these elite guards are assigned to guard the Apostle Paul in shifts. They come on and guard him and then they go off duty.

Perhaps chained to him even as Peter was chained to his soldiers. You talk about a captive audience for the Gospel. It's a worthy question to ask just who was the captive and who was the free man.

These guys couldn't get away from Paul and they got it both barrels day and night whenever they were on duty. The Apostle Paul preaching Christ.

They heard the Gospel from a man that loved them and wanted them to come to know His Savior. It must have made quite an impression on them.

[10 : 40] They saw Him suffer. I mean, He's suffering. Here He is for two years of His life waylaid from His ministry stuck in a prison in Rome.

And they saw how He took it. Patient in affliction. Joyful always. Thankful. Kind.

Folks, what they saw was the fruit of the Spirit. They saw God working in this man and it made an impression on them. They'd seen many prisoners no doubt, but none like this.

He didn't fit the mold of the usual sort of man that they saw. Think what they must have heard. They heard Him when He was talking to visitors that came.

Epaphroditus. They heard Him talk with other Christians. They heard Him talk with other lost people. They heard Him speak to them, boldly telling them of their need of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 44] they heard Him talking to God. Can you imagine a palace guard listening to Paul pray or sing praise to God?

Then we can just imagine these guards getting off duty and going back to the barracks and sitting around and killing time. And it was inevitable before the conversation came around to that strange prisoner.

What about that guy, Paul? He's a different guy, isn't He? Yeah. And then they start exchanging stories. You ever heard Him swear and cuss?

Like the others? No, I never have. I haven't heard Him so much as complain. He's definitely different, but in a good sort of way.

He talks to us with respect. As if He really cares about us. And what about that Jesus Christ that He's always talking about? Well, He told me that He rose from the dead after Pontius Pilate crucified Him.

[12 : 56] Well, He told me He's the Son of God. He told me that if we believe in Him, all of our sins will be forgiven. Say, if you heard Him pray, He talks to God as if you were really listening.

He's not afraid to die either. Emperor Nero may have Him beheaded. It doesn't faze Him. I've never seen a man so bold in the face of death.

For two years, they watched Him and they listened to Him. Whatever their first impressions were over time, His influence grew on them.

For He says here, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

The whole palace guard heard of this prisoner. prisoner. And everyone else, they told their families, visitors that came, heard about him, Caesar's household, the servants.

[14 : 09] He was the talk of the town. Everyone's talking about this prisoner Paul and why he's in prison. man. It was clear that he was no criminal.

It was clear that he was no threat to the state. He wouldn't hurt a flea. He loves people. Then why is he in jail? Why is he being held? It's because of Jesus Christ.

Christ. And there it was, the advance of the gospel. Jesus Christ, who is he? Let me tell you what Paul said. And on and on goes the gospel chariot, advancing through Paul's imprisonment.

You know, these pagan soldiers, these palace guards may never have heard the gospel had the apostle not been thrown into their prison.

It seems that some of them came to believe. But when we get to the end of the letter, Paul says, all the saints here send you greeting, especially those who belong to Caesar's household, which would have included all in the service of Caesar Nero, the maids, the free men, the slaves, the palace guard, the gospel chariot went places that it had not been before because Paul was their prisoner.

[15 : 42] And have you ever considered that your prison-like experiences, the things that confine you, that sideline you, suffering and sickness, that these things often bring you into contact with people who otherwise would never hear the gospel.

our brother Gerard over in Grenoble, France, and he's got to go back in the hospital because his cancer has come back.

And he's got to go back for more treatments. And while he's there eating in the cafeteria of the hospital, a 12-year-old boy, suffering greatly himself, comes walking in with tubes dangling all over, and he stumbles and falls right in front of Gerard who catches him.

He'd never seen him before in his life and probably never would have had it not been for his recurrence of cancer. He later goes up to his hospital room and witnesses to him and to his parents. You see, what has happened to me has fallen out to the furtherance of the gospel, the advance of the gospel. Or I think of dear pastor friend, Brother Earl Blackburn, two years ago almost lost his life

to colon cancer because of a misdiagnosis of his doctor.

[17:04] Sidelined from the ministry, no longer able to preach to the hundreds, now locked up in a cancer ward somewhere, dying. The Lord spared him.

And you know the door is wide open for Brother Earl to go into these support groups for cancer patients. And he tells them right up front, I'm a minister of the gospel and a survivor of cancer. And then he tells them how that Jesus Christ, the change and the difference Jesus Christ has made in his life and in the way that he has coped with his cancer.

And people sit and listen with rapt attention to a man they probably wouldn't have given the time of day to had he not had cancer like them. You see, what has happened to me has fallen out to the advancement of the gospel.

my dear pastor friend and his wife, 16 years ago, had their first baby and the umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck in the midst of delivery, cutting off the oxygen to the brain.

[18:25] So the child was damaged, has a condition called microcephaly, where the brain never developed normally.

And so his body never developed normally. He's got cerebral palsy and other things, and everything has to be done for him. And for 16 years, this minister and his wife have done everything for their son.

And it hasn't been easy. But you know what? It has brought them into contact with other parents of severely handicapped children. And as a group, their divorce rate surges to 75%.

They're not able to deal with the pain and misery. And Jamie and Lydia have been able to say, let us tell you how Jesus Christ and the comforts and help and strength of the gospel have enabled us to stand.

You see, what has happened to us has fallen out, has worked for, has caused the gospel to advance. Could it be that there are people who would never hear the gospel unless you spent that time in the hospital room, in that doctor's office, in some place of suffering?

[19:59] And now people are watching you with a renewed interest. And now they're listening. And now they're looking to see, does he have hope? Does she have hope? In the midst of what would otherwise be despair.

New platforms for the gospel are often built out of prison-like experiences. And that's how Paul views his two years in prison a platform to reach new sinners for Christ.

The gospel is advancing, he says, to the Philippian believers. And I wonder if we share the apostle's passion for the advancement of the gospel of Christ.

Does it drive you to ever stop what you're doing and pray, God, advance your cause in Kenya, advance your cause in France? Does it ever cause you to dig deeper into your wallet and to speed the gospel on its way?

Does it ever make you open your mouth and witness this passion for the advancement of the gospel? Does it change the way you view affliction and trials and prison like suffering is the most important thing to you then?

[21:22] Your own ease and rest, your health, your freedom, or the progress of the gospel? Wow, I confess that's another level, that's another step.

servants of Christ, we should ask in every new situation, how can I advance the gospel here, in this place, in this problem?

If we had a greater passion for the gospel, we would be more forgetful of ourselves, we would be found whining a whole lot less under our trials.

when I see what God is willing to do in order to advance his gospel, sometimes it causes me to tremble. He'll let a man be thrown into prison and forgotten for 12 years.

He'll let a minister get colon cancer. He'll have a severely handicapped child born into a family.

[22:33] He's out to advance the glory of His name. It's radical Christianity, isn't it, that calls us to subordinate our own interests, our own ease, our own comforts, our own enjoyments to the greater advancement of the gospel.

That's radical Christianity. Tamer forms are being sold today, but none of them come with the stamp of Jesus Christ and His apostles were followers of the crucified one, the one who gave his life in the cause of the gospel advance, the one who says to us, if you're going to be my disciple, you're going to need a cross.

Come on, you're going to need to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me every day. this is the way the master went, will not the servant tread it still.

Paul's imprisonment ministered to the advancement of the gospel because many more sinners heard the message of Jesus Christ.

But there's a second way that his imprisonment served to advance the gospel. not only did more sinners hear the gospel, but many saints were stimulated to speak the gospel more courageously. [23 : 59] And so that would lead to further and further sinners hearing the gospel. But in verse 14, he says, because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

The wheels on the gospel chariot grinds slowly because of our timidity and fear of men. It's what causes us to be silent when we should speak.

To hesitate before the world. When an opportunity for witness arises, this is why we freeze up and say nothing. The fault is not in the message.

I wonder if we ever pause and think about it. We have the best message. To proclaim. We have what everyone in the world needs more than anything else.

That's our message. What a privilege to be proclaiming it. The problem isn't with the message. The problem is with ourselves. Problem is our own timidity, lack of courage, fear of man.

[25 : 10] And do you know it was no different for the saints in Rome? them. They're cut out of the same cloth as we are. It's the same flesh and blood.

They too struggled. The fear of men. They too were often silent when they should have spoken up for Christ. But that all changed when Paul was thrown into prison.

And it wasn't just with one or two Christians in Rome. This is something that happened to the majority of the Christians. He says most of the brothers.

And sisters, you're included in that. Brethren included. Brothers and sisters. Most of the church, you see, found a new confidence and courage.

Became more willing to risk it. To dare to speak of Christ. Why? Because Paul's in prison. That stirred up new boldness. Now, how does that happen?

[26 : 17] You might think the otherwise. That people would freeze up and say, oh, I'm all the more petrified of speaking. Look where it got Paul. He's in prison.

He's waiting for the verdict. And he may be executed. And we zip the lip. That's not what happened. Just the opposite again. The opposite of what we would expect the situation to produce.

God is pleased to produce something absolutely contrary to it. Most of the brethren in the Lord became more bold because of Paul's imprisonment.

Well, think about it. They didn't see him quitting and shutting up in prison. They saw that Paul's still preaching in prison. Look at his boldness right in the presence of those criterion guards.

And then they begin to hear of the defense that he gave before the judges, before the emperor, how he stood up for the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

[27 : 24] And then they start to hear of conversions happening in Caesar's household and among the praetorian guard. They see that all that the enemy does to squelch the gospel has been frustrated and actually brought about the advance of the gospel.

And they take courage and they are emboldened to speak whereas before they wouldn't. And so in this way the gospel advances through the imprisonment of Paul.

It's when we hear of a Caroline Vaughn witnessing to her teenage schoolmate in an atheistic public school that we sit up and say John what a wimp you are.

And we say if God can help her there why can't he help me here? And we grow bold. And we hear about our brothers and sisters in China boldly speaking of Christ.

even though they've got to pay huge fines for doing so or spend time in prison for doing so. And there's something that grows within us. That backbone that's instilled in us to stand for the gospel here in the land of religious liberty.

[28 : 49] That's what happened when Paul was put into prison and he kept on boldly proclaiming Christ so others grew bold. And brother sister, do you know that your bold example of witness is an encouragement to the rest of us to do the same.

May God light that fire among us and so from one and another here and there spark this greater boldness such as happened in Rome so long ago.

And so we see this. What seemed like curtains for the church, for the gospel witness when her chief spokesman's put in prison, God actually turns it to the greater advancement of the gospel.

Do we expect this God to do the same thing today? We ought to be praying for it. We ought to be aiming for it. We ought to be confidently expecting it.

Well, that's the first part of our passage. Now, in the last part of the passage, Paul shifts gears. Though his imprisonment spurred others on to proclaim Christ all the more, not all did so for the same reasons.

[30:04] And we come then to the two different groups of preachers. There were those who preached Christ with good motives and there were those who preached Christ with bad motives.

Notice them as I read verses 15 through 17. It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will.

The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

You see the two groups of preachers? Both emboldened to preach the gospel more boldly and fearlessly because Paul's in prison.

Boy, there's some differences. Now, before we draw out the differences, we need to notice the one great similarity. It's the message.

[31:07] They all were preaching Christ. Did you see that? They all were preaching Christ. The message of both groups was rock solid.

This anti-Paul group, whatever it was, we'll talk a little bit about them later, they were not preaching false doctrine. They weren't those Judaizers who were trying to teach it's Jesus plus works.

Paul didn't have a kind word to say. He would never rejoice in such preaching. He's able to rejoice in this preaching because they all preach Christ. Even later in chapter 3 and verse 2, he's going to call those Judaizers dogs and evil workers.

So, he's not referring to them. Whoever these detractors from Paul were, they were preaching Christ. The message was sure and certain.

But though the message was the same, their motives were entirely different. Some were pro-Paul and some were anti-Paul. Let's look first at those who preach Christ with good motives.

[32:10] These were sympathetic with the Apostle. They were friendly to the Apostle Paul. Their attitudes toward him were marked by goodwill and love.

Those are the terms used of them. They preach out of goodwill toward me and love toward me. They wished him well in prison even as they preached on the outside.

And they viewed themselves on the same team. He's in and we're out. But he's one of us. Paul says in verse 16, they know that I'm put here for the defense of the gospel.

And that word put here means appointed here. I've been assigned here. I've been assigned by God to be here. No longer assigned to be out there.

I've been assigned to be here. And Paul views himself as a soldier on duty in prison. The soldier of the Lord. Here he is. I've been put here by God.

[33:13] He has an assignment for me here. And that's how he viewed it. There's some work for me to be done here. He has put me here. And that work is to be here for the defense of the gospel.

Wonderful thing, though, in our trials to know that it's God who has put us here. We're not here by accident. Paul's not in prison, but God has put me here. Is that how you embrace your prison-like experiences?

Paul's in prison for the gospel. He's on trial because of the gospel, the message that he preached. And whenever someone takes swipes at the gospel and opens their mouth against the gospel, we who believe it must stand up and open our mouths in defense of it to do otherwise as traitorous. And that's what Paul sees. The gospel is on trial here. And I've been put here in defense of that gospel. And these preachers know that.

They sympathize with that. They know I'm God's servant put here to defend the gospel. And they have no ill will toward me, no ulterior motives in their preaching of Christ.

[34:31] They preach with good motive. But not so the other group. We come to the second group that preach Christ and these from bad motives. this is an anti-Paul group.

And you can't read your New Testament without seeing that there were many people who were anti-Paul. Do you expect everyone to love you and like you? You know there were preachers that

didn't like the apostle Paul.

Preachers of Christ. Frankly, they've been irritated by Paul's popularity. They're envious of his success.

They're jealous of his position. Jealous of all the attention that he's getting. And so when they hear that Paul's in prison, they're smiling inside.

They're glad he's in prison. They're happy enough to have him stay there a while because it will provide an opportunity for them to score some points while he's sidelined.

[35 : 36] Now, some of the attention will come my way. And so they're spurred on to preach more boldly and fearlessly and more often and more widely because Paul's in prison and this is our chance to get some of that limelight.

It's the senior basketball player who's jealous of the younger star player on the team. And when he falls out with five minutes in the game to go and all the team and the crowd all inside he smiles.

This will provide an opportunity for me to shoot more often, for people to see what I can do. You say, can preachers of Christ become envious of other preachers?

Can preachers of Christ become envious of other preachers' success, their gifts, their position, their honor? Yes, they can.

Here they are, preaching Christ out of the stinking self-ambition. Out of rivalry. It's a competitive thing with them.

[36 : 52] It's us versus Paul. It's the senior against the star player. They're on the same team, but the rivalry is going on on the same team.

What's in it for me? It's seeking personal gain and taking advantage out of Paul's imprisonment. It is possible to preach the right message from wrong motives.

But what's wrong with this picture? What's so desperately wrong with this picture? A humble Jesus who makes himself nothing, being preached by men who are out to make a name for themselves. A self-denying son of God being preached by preachers with selfish ambition who at the end of the day are hoping others will think better of them after hearing them preach Christ.

So the gospel is made into a soapbox on which to promote themselves. Can that happen? It does happen.

[38 : 16] It is happening. It happened in Rome. It's happening today. And brothers and sisters, if I can preach Christ out of selfish ambition, then you can deke out of selfish ambition.

You can teach. You can nursery. You can usher. You can do any service to Christ out of selfish ambition. God has an eye not only to what we do in his service, but why we are doing it.

And it's only when the motives of men's hearts are exposed that each will receive his reward from God. 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 5.

These were motivated by Paul's imprisonment to preach Christ, but to preach out of selfish ambitions. But even worse, verse 17, not only were they wanting glory to come to themselves, 17 says that they were even supposing that they could stir up trouble for Paul while he was in prison. That they could increase his distress and affliction while in prison. As if prison's not enough for Paul, they were wanting to make him even sink in greater grief.

[39 : 33] Wow, that's hostile intent. That's hitting a man while he's down. Even boxing says that's illegal. But sometimes what preachers can do to other preachers is more like a beast.

We're going to preach more, and by preaching more, when Paul can't preach more, they think that when he hears about their increased success, that it will irritate him and annoy him to death.

It'll make him envious and jealous and give him grief. And that's what they're hoping will happen.

That's their aim. They falsely think that he's just like them.

He's in it for the praise. He's motivated by the same selfish ambition and petty rivalry as we are.

He's more concerned with personal stats than the team's score, and they could not be more mistaken.

The Apostle Paul lost his small ambitions at the cross. And I don't mean just once years ago, but every day he found his way back to Calvary, and he saw what it cost his Savior to advance the gospel and to bring good news to him.

[40 : 52] And he lost those small, petty ambitions for me and mine, and his heartbeat with the advance of the gospel that displays the glory and grace of God.

But these guys think that they'll add a friction to Paul when he sees their success in preaching Christ. Notice Paul's response in verse 18.

What is his response to the mean-spirited nastiness of these other preachers? Well, in three words, what of it? What of it?

Look what he says. What does it matter? The important thing, you see, there's that ambition again. There's that main thing with Paul. The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached, and because of this, I rejoice.

Do you see the picture? Paul down in the prison, rejoicing even at those who are preaching Christ to try to get his goat.

[42:10] Well, they may have had a desire for Christ. I don't know. But it was a mixed motive because alongside of it was a desire to promote themselves and to demote the Apostle Paul.

And yet he rejoices. They couldn't steal his joy. We're learning about joy throughout this whole letter. And I want you to notice this about his joy this morning.

His joy was attached to his passion. His joy wasn't attached to his circumstances. Again, we've seen his joy is attached to his passion, which is the advancement of the gospel.

Is that doing fine? My joy is intact. They haven't ruffled my joy one bit. Christ is being preached even by them with their wrong motives. The message of Jesus is advancing.

You see the passion of the man, the single minded compassion of the man. If Jesus is being made known, that's the all important thing.

[43:08] That's all I'm concerned about. Nothing else matters. Nothing else could get to him. So what if I'm being put down? Christ is being lifted up. Hallelujah. Rejoice.

He must increase. I must decrease anyway. In every way, from false or true motives, Christ is being preached. You see how something bigger than his own concerns had caught his eye?

It captured his heart. and it kept him from a bitter spirit toward those who are nasty toward him. It kept him from losing his joy.

I wonder, do you let the nastiness of others get to you? Do you let their nastiness spoil your joy, your peace, ruin your day?

how much of what bothers us and gets us all worked up and bent out of shape is due to a lack of this passion for the most important thing, the advance of the gospel.

[44:10] The advance of the gospel. We've made ourselves the main thing for a while. Or at least, we've made ourselves too important of a thing for a while.

And we need a passion check, a passion check. What's really important here? My justice, my ease, my reputation are Christ's gospel, the advancement of it, his glory.

It's not about the servant, it's about the master. We're seeing something of the passion that drove the apostle Paul. And if I thought more about the advance of his cause, I'd be thinking less about mine.

There's a blessed self-forgetfulness about Paul, isn't there? That I want to know more about. A blessed self-forgetfulness. We don't even get to hear how bad the food was in prison.

We don't get to hear about the rats and the mice, and about the restroom and shower facilities, and the temperature.

[45:20] We don't get to hear anything. That's not important. I'll tell you what's important, saints of Philippi. The gospel's advancing here. Oh, Lord Jesus, give me more of that passion that would be such that would swallow up my preoccupation with how it's going with me.

And I'd be caught up with how's it going for the gospel. gospel. And I'd be reading those missionary updates in Kenya and Clonmel and France and South America.

I'd be wanting to know how's it going with the gospel. Oh, they've got trouble over here. Let me pray for the advance of the gospel. They've got a need over here. Let me give extra for that need for the gospel.

Lost people in my place of work, let me open my mouth for the advancement of the gospel. And we forget about ourselves and our fears and our pride and all the rest.

What does Christ and the progress of His cause mean to you? My lost sinner friend, we've been talking a lot this morning about the gospel. The gospel means good news.

[46:33] And it is a wonder that God has anything good to say to us poor sinners. We're His enemies. We're His rebels. We've turned our back toward Him. We've said of His Son, He's not worth serving.

I'd rather have my sin than Jesus. And yet, He comes to us with good news. Amazing. Don't let it be lost and wasted on you another morning.

Jesus is coming back to punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel. they will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord.

They will perish because they refuse to love the truth and so to be saved. Here's a gospel that says, if you believe on the Lord Jesus, all your sins will be forgiven and forgotten.

And though you might be yawning at that message this morning, do you know, young person, there's coming a day when every sinner outside of Christ would give the whole world to hear the gospel offer one more time.

[47:46] But it will be too late. Because when you die, your destiny is set. Or when Christ returns, your destiny is set. But this is a day of grace.

This is a day of gospel news. There is good news. The Lord Jesus has put that news in my heart and mouth and sent me to preach it today for him, to you here, that he will have you, that God will forgive you, and he'll have you as his sons and daughters if you will but repent and come to his son, the Lord Jesus.

Take your sins to Christ, a day. Become a new creature. Become a member of his family. But don't stop short of having personal dealings with the Lord Jesus, whose heart we have seen this morning, because behind the Apostle Paul's heart, you see, is the Savior's heart.

Where did the Apostle Paul get this passion? He got it from Jesus. I'm staying close with Jesus.

And what's the passion of Jesus? My friend, it's the salvation of sinners.

It's the advancement of his gospel. Come and welcome to Jesus this morning. Come and put your trust in him and live. Let's pray. You talk to the Lord.

[49:09] I'll talk to the Lord. And I'll close when we're done. Father in heaven, there is enough in the gospel of Jesus Christ to make us stand in awe for all eternity.

We're embarrassed that trivial things catch our attention and become our ambition and our pursuits. we're embarrassed by the amount of things that revolve around us that are so important and how easy it is for us in this world to forget the cause of the gospel.

Lord, would you increase our passion for the gospel to where it would cause us to forget ourselves much more. Lord, others are chasing after other things this morning.

They don't know Christ. They don't know the peace and the joy, the forgiveness of sins. They don't know what it is to have a Savior who saves from the wrath of God forever.

Bring them to their senses and bring them to love the Lord Jesus and to come under His cause this morning. Do it for your own praise.

[50:31] We ask in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.