

Parson to Person

AFTER THE STORM

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again” (Philippians 1:2–26 NKJV).

It is evident that Paul wrote this while incarcerated in Rome. It is a very personal letter for Paul as it tells us much about his heart for the Lord, the Gospel and for the people he was called to serve.

We cannot do harm to the text by misapplication, so it is important to recognize Paul’s references herein. First of all, he places focus on the grace of God—as he does in all of his letters. He then tells the Philippians that he has them in his heart, that he prays for them, is appreciative of their co-laboring with him in the gospel, is grateful for their financial support, and for their continued prayers for him as he endured great difficulty—which included ridicule and persecution for what he was doing as an ambassador for Christ. I so relate to Paul—and thus have chosen this text as a jump off spot to bring you all up to date on my recent “incarceration” in the ICU at the hospital!

Paul’s thoughts concerning the church are in harmony with my thoughts for my immediate family (in particular for my wife) and for each of you as the church family God has called me to pastor. I relate to Paul’s explanations concerning his labors in the Lord, and his desire to remain “in the body” that he might continue his services toward and with those in Philippi (not to mention the other churches).

In particular, I relate to these verses: *“...in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”*

I am thankful to be “coming to you again.” And, in such I must say, I am not ashamed of the positions and statements I made prior to this recent trial—nor of the persecutions I have taken for them. I am not ashamed to say that I need to be here (*in the body*) a bit longer—and am thankful that the Lord has agreed! I am proud to represent the Lord in the proclamation of the Gospel, and in particular, I am thankful that all of you desire to allow me to serve you as pastor. It is a privilege!

I believe this world needs strong leaders and men who are unashamed to take a stand—and I’m just getting started—again.

Let’s have fun together.

I love you all,

Pastor Paul