

Lockdown Opportunities

Բանտարկութեան Պատեհութիւնները

Philippians 1:1-11

Welcome to a new series of sermons. In the coming months I would like to preach from the letter to the Philippians. It is a letter of encouragement and joy that we all need in these conditions in which we are living, namely, the Corona Virus pandemic.

Paul loved this church. “Philippi, in northern Greece, was the first place in Europe that heard the news that there was a new king, namely the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth.”¹ Please read Acts 16, and you can see the details of how God used Paul in this city. Paul enjoyed writing letters to the churches he established. He wanted to encourage them to keep growing in walk with Jesus, or warn them from false teaching which will divert them from God. NT Wright says: “but this letter breathes a confident trust and enjoyment which we don’t always find elsewhere.”²

The city of Philippi was an important city. “Not only was it an important city in the Roman province of Macedonia, but it had the special status of being a Roman colony (Acts 16:12). This meant that it was like a little piece of Rome abroad. The Latin language was used; Roman law controlled local administration and taxes; many aspects of public life went on as in Rome itself and most of the officials had the same titles as in Rome.”³ Below I will add more notes about the city of Philippi, its location and significance.⁴

Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter. Scholars have different opinions about the location of the prison. Some say it was in Rome, while others think it was Ephesus. In any case, Paul and Timothy were in prison together. Those days, the situation of the prisons was very harsh and unhealthy. Food and clothing were not provided. Friends of the prisoners would provide for them. The believers of Philippi were one of those providers. This letter is a thanksgiving letter for the love and the generosity of the congregation of this church.

-Greetings:

*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with
the overseers and deacons:
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
(Phil.1:1-2)*

Paul does not use any credentials or fancy titles to present himself and Timothy. Paul says they are the *doulos* of Jesus, the slaves or the servants of Jesus. That is their identity. And with that they pass the grace and peace of Jesus to this beloved congregation.

PAUL MADE HIS IMPRISONMENT AN OPPORTUNITY

-Praying Opportunity:

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:3-11 ESV)

1. Praying with a Thankful Heart

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you (3)

Paul and Timothy were in prison. They could easily go to self-pity and depression; they chose to use the prison as an opportunity to stay in prayer. Please also notice the attitude, a **thankful heart...**

Now we are not in prison because of our bold preaching about Jesus. No, but we can learn from Paul. We are sheltering at home. We are staying at home. We don't like it, but it is what it is. How about turning this situation to an opportunity for prayer of thanksgiving, with a thankful heart...

In what ways is your sheltering at home an opportunity?

8:00 AM and 8:00 PM is my pilgrimage to pray for each other.
Are your prayers becoming repetitious?

2. Praying with Joy

always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, (4)

Paul is not just thankful, but when this congregation comes to his mind, he prays with joy. Here I see joy as result of being content with God. Inner joy is a gift from God. It is result of experiencing the grace of God.

I pray that we don't lose heart in praying with joy.

3. Praying for the Partnership (*Koinonia*)

because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now....⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. (5, and 7)

- a. Gospel
- b. Grace

Paul is thankful and full of joy because this church is **partner** with him in the gospel. Which can mean, they received **the gospel** of Good News of Jesus Christ, and also they are **partners** in sharing **the gospel** of Good News of Jesus Christ.

It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all **partakers with me of grace**, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Last week Sevan and I called a person (ill hold her name for security reasons) who is missionary in a tough place. I experienced what Paul experienced. She and Sevan and I were childhood friends. We grew up same area. She went to be missionary in the toughest areas in the world. She continues until today to be that person. When I think about her, I am thankful for her being the missionary who has joy of Jesus, who is partner with me and many of you who believe in sending people to the world.

Do you feel partners with me and Kevin? Many of you do. Many of you know the gospel. And we will not stop digging more in the knowledge of the Word, and share the Word.

We are partners of Christ indeed.

4. Praying for Growing Love

For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment (8)

a. Knowledge

b. Discernment

Paul loves this group. He is looking forward to seeing them face-to-face one day. Meanwhile he is praying that they will grow in love with two things:

-The Knowledge of God: It is not just mental knowledge, It is an intimate relationship with God, to know him, to have close relationship with HIM.

-The Discernment of what is good, what is excellent, and what is pure and blameless.⁵

The verb *dokimazo, discern*, means 'to put to the test', like testing the coin.

To approve what is the best...

You know that this is my desire for you as well. To know Him deeply and be able to discern His will in your character and your decisions, and to make Him known to the World.

To end:

An important statement from Paul:

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (6)

Wait a minute, Paul gives all the credit to Jesus Christ.

He is the beginner of the work.

His Spirit will lead us every day

And He will complete His work one day.

Meanwhile we are called to be his disciples ...

Application:

1. Pray , pray for the your family, church family, Fresno, California, USA, Armenia, World.

2. Pray with a Thankful Heart, with Joy.
3. Pray for the partners of the gospel and grace. Start from Fresno and go outside.
4. Pray that you and others may grow in the love of the knowledge of Christ.
5. Always remember it is His Work. Christ started it and Christ will complete it.

Let us approach the Table

Amen

1. N.T. Wright, Paul for Everyone (The Prison Letters) P 84
2. *ibid* p 84
3. Francis Foulkes , New Bible Commentary (Accordance)
4. **John Hanneman:** Philippi was an important Macedonian city, founded by Philip II, king of Macedon. Located in northern Greece, on a major highway, there are ruins still remaining on the site, including a church. In 42 B.C., Octavian and Mark Anthony won two major battles on the nearby plain. Octavian re-populated Philippi with Roman citizens, primarily discharged veterans, making the city a colony of Rome. We are reminded of the British Empire, where colonists maintained all the traditions of home—tea in the afternoon, cricket, etc. Philippi’s inhabitants were very loyal to the emperor Nero, whom they referred to as divine “Lord” and “Savior.” Christians who worshipped Jesus as Lord stood in stark contrast to the majority of people living in this Roman colony. This is one of the apostle Paul’s prison epistles, most likely written from Rome in 60-62 A.D. There are four references to his being in chains. Paul does not know if he will die or be set free, but his letter indicates that he expects to see the Philippians again. He had a very affectionate relationship with the church at Philippi, which he helped found on his second missionary journey, as recounted in Acts 16. This was the only church to help Paul with financial support. In fact, according to scholars, this letter has all the earmarks of a friendship letter.
5. The verb *dokimazō*, *discern*, means ‘to put to the test’, and then, as a result of such examination, ‘to accept as tested, to approve’. It is often used to denote the testing of coins. Those coins which are ‘approved’ are genuine currency. But a wider usage (e.g. examination of cattle, in Luke 14:19) is also found. The object of the verb in this context may be rendered ‘the things which differ’ or ‘the things which excel’ (cf. GNB, and NEB and mg.). The meaning here, as in Romans 2:18 where the exact turn of phrase, which is derived from current popular philosophy, is repeated, seems to be ‘the things which really matter’ (cf. Moffatt’s ‘a sense of what is vital’).