

#2 Philippians 1:14

Tom Tillman

Verse 13: '(everyone can see 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.'

All those around Paul were able to discern, because of his attitude, that Paul's chains were 'in Christ,' it was obvious that God's will was for Paul to be in chains, even the palace guard noticed. Doubtless, Paul was able to lead many, even from Caesar's household, to faith in Jesus Christ. In verse 4:22, as Paul was closing this letter he wrote, 'All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.'

Many of the believers in Rome, where Paul was being held when he wrote this letter, had become much bolder in telling the Gospel to other Romans because they witnessed Paul, even in chains, being bold in telling the Gospel to all who would listen.

When we see other Christians bravely witnessing, even in the face of persecution, it emboldens us to do the same... first, because we feel ashamed if we've been reluctant to do so but also, when we recognize that the world didn't end for that person we watched or read about, sharing their faith; we realize that we can do the same thing and we can be just as successful as they. Evangelism doesn't take great intelligence or bravery; it simply takes a willingness, with the Holy Spirit's help, to just do it. (Actually, for some, their world really did end, they were martyred, (Jim Elliot, Nick Saint) but even that, especially that, emboldens us to speak up also.)

I think I remember, while watching Billy Graham on TV, I said, 'I can do that... that doesn't look so hard; why didn't anyone ever tell me how easy Evangelism is?' And so, I researched it for myself and found how to string together several Bible verses so that I could clearly lay out the plan of Salvation, to anyone, from the Gospel and I wrote out and memorized a good Salvation prayer... and since that time, I've been privileged to lead many people to Christ and, more importantly, I've been able to show many people how to do the same. That isn't proud or boastful, I'm just saying, 'anyone can do it if they want to.' Paul always said the same thing.

Verse 15: '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;'

When Paul was free, preaching and teaching, some, whom God had also called, and gifted, to preach and teach may have held back being humbled or intimidated by Paul's knowledge and ability. On the other hand, some others may have stayed in the shadows, secretly envious of Paul and his gifts and abilities.

When Paul was imprisoned, both of these groups may have stepped forward to begin preaching and teaching; some had the goal of glorifying God while others sought their own glory by gaining for themselves a large following. Paul was not envious, he simply glorified God that the Gospel was being preached. He wasn't concerned about the motivations of those teaching and preaching; he was only concerned and incensed when the Judaizers began teaching heresy to the Christians in Galatia.

Neither should we be overly concerned with TV preacher types; God will always glorify Himself. He is in control. But we think, 'How could some of them go around preaching and teaching with impure motives?' Everywhere the Gospel is preached, preachers, pastors, evangelists are caught in sin while their secret lives of sin are discovered and displayed for all to see. Many, however, rather than humbly confessing their sin and resigning, defiantly continue on after a quick but phony confession while having their son or wife hold down the money tree during their short sabbatical, during which, they've '*seen the light!*' They're a new man! Sadly, most of the 'goats' in their congregations stay and continue their important work of making their pastor and his family wildly rich while they, themselves, fall deeper into poverty. These men are greedy, envious, dark hearted false Christians, masquerading as men of God. Many of them are never held to account because their promise to the people is that they, too, can become rich if they will only keep coming while giving more.

Verse 17: 'but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.¹⁸ 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.'

Paul was unconcerned that others were preaching the Gospel 'without him;' he was not envious or self seeking. His goal was to see the true Gospel preached; he didn't care who did so or their motives.

If their hearts were pure and to glorify God, that was, of course, best but even if they were preaching through envy and jealousy of Paul, that, too, was fine by Paul; the Gospel was going out in *either* case.

Remember what Solomon wrote: 'He who is wise wins souls.' Prov 11:30 But also, He who is in prison and sees others winning souls and is glad, is also wise, like Paul.

The same should be true for each of us. Doesn't everybody? Actually, no: remember Jonah? God told Jonah to go to Nineveh to preach the Gospel. Jonah hated the Ninevites and refused to go. God changed his mind; Jonah did, finally, go to Nineveh, he preached the Gospel, they repented and Jonah was angry that God had mercy on Nineveh.

By the way, yes, Jonah, way back then, did preach the Gospel. The basic Gospel has always been, simply, that God will have mercy on those who repent and come to Him in His prescribed manner, by faith: 'saved by Grace through faith.' The basis of Salvation has always been the same, from Abel through the Millennium.

Sometimes we're guilty of Jonah's sin: we wouldn't want to see some people saved; we are not at all saddened by the fact that certain people will never gain Salvation; we're glad for their hardness of heart... maybe you've never thought like that... but I have... even though it should not be so.

Paul rejoiced whenever, by whomever and to whomever the Gospel was preached.

Verse 19: 'For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,'

Paul knows that His imprisonment, through the prayers of those praying for him, will culminate in his 'deliverance' but not necessarily his being freed from prison and, actually, he doesn't seem to care. If he is released from prison, he will have been delivered but if he is killed, he will also have been delivered, delivered from his earthly body and into the presence of the Lord, where he would prefer to be.

Verse 20: '... 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.'

Paul was always bold in sharing the Gospel; that doesn't mean he was loud, pushy or obnoxious, but that he was always ready and willing, even when he was in prison. It didn't matter to Paul; one place was the same as any other and one person was the same as any other. How often have we been '*disemboldened*' in sharing the Gospel? Our greatest fear is simply of '*the unknown*.' We imagine something unpleasant will happen if we open our mouths to name the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ but we never really think of it in concrete terms... just that 'something bad' will happen. If we make ourselves think in concrete terms... 'What is, really, the worst that could happen?' then we would be much bolder in evangelism. That person isn't going to hit me, he won't yell at me... in fact, probably, the very worst that would happen is that he would say, 'I'm not interested,' period. How frightening is that, really? Not very! But, imagine how we would feel if, when we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and He asks, 'Why didn't you at least open your mouth and speak to that person?' Imagine the feeling of shame when we say to Him, 'I was too ashamed to open my mouth!'

That's what Paul is talking about... 'My earnest expectation and hope is that in nothing I shall be ashamed, (when I stand before Him) but with all boldness, as always, so now also (now, even in prison) Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. (whether I'm released or I'm killed.)

Each of us can receive, from Jesus Christ on that day, the same commendation and praise that Paul did but only if we are faithful to deny ourselves and follow Him.

What does it mean to deny myself and pick up my cross and follow Jesus Christ or, as Paul put it, 'imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.'? 1 Cor 11:1 What was it about Paul's life that he was bold enough to say, 'imitate me as I imitate Christ?' What did Jesus Christ do that Paul imitated which we can then imitate?

Jesus said, 'Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.' Mark 8:34

Obviously, when Jesus said that, He had not yet gone to the Cross to be crucified so what did He mean? How did Jesus Christ deny Himself which, then, Paul imitated and which we, too, can imitate?

Paul wrote, 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ **And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit..' Gal 5:22 If we have, and continue to, crucify our flesh, then that fruit of the Spirit will be allowed to grow. If we have not crucified our flesh on a continuing basis, then the fruit of the flesh will be allowed to grow.

But how did Jesus deny Himself, how did Paul and how can we?

The most basic desire of the flesh is for its own preservation, its own protection, that it won't be the target of any kind of abuse or violence. Jesus knew that the Pharisees opposed Him and would, eventually, bring about His death and yet, He always opened His mouth and said what His Father was telling Him to say. He said, 'He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.' John 12:48

Jesus denied His flesh's desire for self preservation. He spoke what the Father told Him to speak, when and always, as He was led, knowing that what He spoke would eventually lead to His death.

That is what Paul imitated. He spoke always, knowing that what He spoke would eventually lead to his imprisonment and eventually death.

That is what we are to imitate: to always be ready to speak what the Holy Spirit leads us to say, denying our flesh's desire to be liked or to be affirmed or to be smiled at. Think about it... for now, the only abuse we might receive, from speaking the Gospel, would be rejection of what we say... that's a far cry from what Jesus and Paul were willing to risk. Now, the time is coming and may arrive even before the Rapture when more severe persecution will happen but... the only way we'll be prepared for that more severe persecution, when the risk is high, is if we have practiced being bold, now, when the risk is low. Now, the worst that can happen, here in this country, is simple rejection of what we say or we might get ourselves 'unfriended.'

If we are ashamed of the Gospel now... and that really is the cause of our not speaking up... we are ashamed of the Gospel or ashamed of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ... if we are ashamed now... when the risk is so low... there is little doubt that we will also be ashamed later, when the risk is high... when the life of our flesh is at risk which it so desperately seeks to preserve.

If we are ashamed now, with a little old lady on the bus, what will we do then when someone dressed all in black with an AK-47 says, 'Stand up, if you're a Christian... I am going to kill you first!?' I think about that. Would I have the courage to not deny my Lord? That's why I practice, now, in trying to never shrink back from saying the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't completely trust myself later, so I must practice now.

Thankfully, Jesus said, 'But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; ²⁰ for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.' Matt 10:19

And Paul wrote, 'Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.' Eph 6:13

Verse 21: 'For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.'

There it is! Even if I die, it will absolutely be my gain! Jesus said, 'For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.' Matt 16:25

Paul was allowed to write, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: 'Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ,' because his lifestyle had become aligned with that of the Lord Jesus Christ; he lived his life for Jesus Christ instead of for himself. His choices and desires were conformed to the will of God. He also wrote: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Rom 12:1

He could say that, 'for me to die is gain,' because nothing of this Earth held his attention or his affection; all of

it faded to nothing in the light of finally stepping into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, never to leave. Later in this letter, he will write: 'But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ,' Phpp 3:7

We can know our own heart or even the heart of someone else by acknowledging what is important to us/them, by learning what they are not ready to give up or to leave behind. Is someone reluctant to leave their thriving business which they built from scratch? Are they reluctant to leave their wildly successful acting career? Do they need to finish their 'bucket list?' Do they really want to, first, travel to see the Taj Mahal? We have a regular radio caller who doesn't want the Rapture to happen; he hasn't had a real girlfriend yet and he is demanding that God supply him one; certainly, that very well could be an indication of a person who is unsaved to begin with.

Many of us have or do things which we might be reluctant to give up at a moment's notice. At the very least, such attitudes indicate a fundamental misunderstanding of what awaits us, the moment we are caught up, together, to meet the Lord in the air and then to be taken back to the place He has prepared for us, in His Father's House: 'Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. ⁴ And where I go you know, and the way you know.' John 14:1

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' 1 Cor 2:9 We can't even imagine the wonders God has planned for us, His children. Conversely, those who reject Jesus Christ can't even imagine the horrors that await them for their eternity. Paul had been there, to Heaven; he had seen it already; so that, of course, helped him to consider this World as nothing by comparison. So, really, we must believe it by faith, even more than Paul did since he had seen it.

Verse 22: 'But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.'

But Paul was willing to set aside his desire to leave and be with His Lord; he was willing to stay on in his mortal body in order to continue preaching, teaching and writing for the growth and maturity of the nascent Church. He probably understood that his commission, from God, was to bring forth most of the doctrine for the Church. Paul was the one who firmly and finally brought the Church forward from being, mostly, a new Jewish sect and into God's intended Worldwide, Gentile and Jewish, New Creation of the Bride and Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, drawn for every nation, tribe and tongue, from around the entire World.

When Paul wrote that his continuing on in the flesh would mean fruit, his meaning was twofold: first, it meant the growth and maturity of the Church but it also showed his understanding that everything we do, for the glory of God, will be eternally rewarded in ways we cannot even imagine.

Even though Paul's life and ministry were met with lies, persecution, beatings, imprisonment and finally a martyr's death, he was willing to persevere because he was able to look beyond his present circumstances; he was able to set his heart and mind on the things above, the things that were coming, and not on the things of the Earth: 'If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.' Col 3:1 '...that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind' Phpp 3:8