



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

3 = Grace in Imprisonment?

Announcements:
7/28 @8:30 -
Sunday School

AUGUST 18-25
Grace Groups
Relaunched!
SEE SIGN UP
SHEETS

REVIEW: Was there anything covered or said on Sunday that you had any questions or comments about?

ICE BREAKER: What do you think of when you hear “persecution”?

READ: Philippians 1:7-8

This section continues Paul’s thankful praise for the Philippian Church. It is worth our while to see what he is so thankful for. In particular he is thankful for: his remembrance of the church, their partnership in the Gospel, the assurance that he has of *their* salvation, and then, here in what we just read, that they share in partaking in grace *in Paul’s imprisonment*. So today I would like to come face to face with a rather difficult question: how can imprisonment be a part of Grace?

The first way that we see Paul’s imprisonment in particular as a part of grace is by seeing what his imprisonment gains. In particular it is “the defense and confirmation of the Gospel.” As Paul looks at his chains, it seems that he sees less the “imprisonment” part of his incarceration, and rather sees this as just another chance for the Gospel to be proclaimed. His being in prison is both a sign that the Gospel is going forth (a confirmation) and his willingness to be imprisoned is therefore a defense. To say that slightly differently. If prison is what it takes for the Gospel to be spread then That is a cost Paul is willing to pay; and when Paul makes that same payment, the change that the Gospel brings in his life (and then by extension everyone's life) shows its power. When we see it this way it should not be so surprising that he says grace and imprisonment go hand in hand, since the Gospel is the vehicle of God’s grace, and the Gospel and prison (church history shows) are often seen together.

DISCUSS: What about the “defense and confirmation of the Gospel” make it worth time in a Roman prison? How can we see these things the way Paul does here?

More than just seeing the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, though, I would like us to see the bigger picture, to get there we can look outside of Philippians and to the Second letter to the Church in Corinth.

READ: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

From our limited point of view we might think: “How can grace and imprisonment go together?” But here Paul tells us that, in some way, prison doesn’t matter. Grace is SO big that any amount of prison, trials, trouble (in 2 Corinthians it is all called “light momentary affliction”) is really nothing. It is not even worth comparing one to the other. I actually struggled to find an example that works and this is all I could figure out: Would you take 1 Million Dollars with the “problem” that you have to walk to the mailbox to collect the check? That sounds crazy that anyone would see that as too big of a problem. Well Paul's point is that grace is so incredible that prison is not even worth the comparison. It is less to Paul than a trip to the mailbox. And this is ONLY true because of the truth of Heaven. The hope of heaven, though, means that it is not worth comparing really anything on this earth to the weight of glory that he anticipates. The fun part of this is that this hope is all *because of grace!*

DISCUSS: How is this kind of mindset fostered? How can we view the trials and troubles of this life as “Light momentary afflictions”?