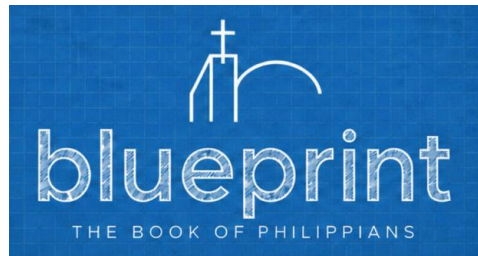




GOING DEEPER

Discussion Questions and more from Sunday's message, before we begin, here are the verses for this week's study! Open your bible to the book of Philippians 1:12-18; Romans 1: 11-13; Romans 15:28.

How much time have you spent this past week reflecting on Jesus and the hope of the gospel? How has reflecting on Him been of help to you? Because that is how we grow in how we think about our relationship to God and how we bring Him Glory each day, in each conversation, interaction, our work, our family. **In everything.** The gospel and the love of Christ should indwell us, and we should be burdened to share that good news with others in these last days. ***Have you shared the good news with anyone this week? Have you showed the love of Jesus to anyone this week?***



Chains That Advance the Gospel

Why do you think hope can help someone endure hardship longer than they thought they could?

How is Christian hope different from just hoping things get better?

Oddly enough, Philippians is a book about joy.

Billy's first sermon series three years ago was on Joy. This is interesting because Paul wrote it from prison at a tough time. Joy is used 19 times in this book.

This teaches us... Joy is a choice not simply an emotion. Happy is external... It's a pretty day - I get a raise - nice meal

Joy is internal... more profound. Joy is found in something personal.

"Happiness isn't about the absence of pain. It's about finding joy in the midst of it."- Bob Goff

When Christ is our priority, circumstances cannot steal our joy.

1. Respond faithfully when God disrupts your plans.

Romans 1:11-13

11 "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, [c] that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles."

Paul wanted to strengthen the Roman believers, but he also expected to be 'mutually encouraged' by their faith. Who has God used to strengthen your faith, and how might God want to use your faith to encourage someone else?

A delayed desire does not necessarily mean a denied calling.

'The Lord directs his children gently. But me, He yanks.'-Bob Pierce (Founder of Samaritans Purse)

Romans 15 (Writing from Corinth to Rome)

Vs 28 "I shall go in way of you to Spain"

Notice again... His plans changed... He wants to go to Spain and then to Rome.

His three Mission trips never took him to Rome. Never met them.

Paul had a holy ambition, but the Holy Spirit redirected the route.

Who planted the church in Rome? My guess...Pentecost: hundreds of new believers "The great Diaspora" (The dispersion)

Their organization is interesting.

Paul wanted Spain, but God gave him chains—and the chains reached people Paul's travel plans never could.

2. Respond faithfully when circumstances create Gospel opportunities.

Philippians 1:12-14

12 "I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard[f] and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

Reminder... this is written from Prison

Who might be watching your response to hardship and gaining courage from your faith?

Billy worked along side a Prison Ministry and told about what he saw and experienced... "Somebody getting' beat up right now"

There's another paradox hiding here... **We ASSUME:**

Paul free = gospel stronger.

Paul imprisoned = gospel weaker.

Paul Reframed His Circumstances

Stop measuring God's faithfulness by circumstances you permit.

My dad's favorite color.....what is it? Billy said it was an experiment.

Vs 12 "I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel."

Paul doesn't deny difficult circumstances....

He refuses to measure them by **comfort**.

He measures them by **gospel impact**.

We often ask the wrong question... "Why is this happening to me?"

The better question: **"How might God use this?"**

As a result, **Courage always becomes contagious.**

Vs 14 "And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

Instead of only praying, "God, get me out of this," ... pray, "God, show me who You have put around me in this."

3. Respond faithfully when ministry is challenging

Philippians 1:15-18

15 "Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. 16 The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice."

Billy thanked those that said they were interested in going on a mission trip to Jamaica and then told a story with two picture illustrations one of the Jamaica Galina Breeze View... and one on the "beach."

Paul's greatest evidence may not have been what he preached... but what happened when life became unfair. It became REALLY UNFAIR

"If you wanna make everyone happy sell ice cream."- Nick Saban

You have to have big skin to be a missionary - Evangelist - discipline... A CHRISTIAN

Note: I didn't say a leader... that's because we're all called to be leaders.

This is personal... **Billy's two daughters changed majors over anti-Christian professors**

Paul gets surprisingly personal. Not in his character

Vs 15 "Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will."

"preaching" isn't about Sermons... "what is he preaching about"

This is more about aggressive opinions... "Soapbox"

Rearview mirror...useful, but you cannot drive safely while staring into it.

Criticism may deserve a glance... but never focus

Paul refuses to surrender calling for conflict

Paul saw that some people were doing the right thing—preaching Christ—but from the wrong motives. How can we keep our focus on Christ when ministry, service, or church life gets tangled up with envy, rivalry, or comparison?

Vs 17 “I am put here for the defense of the gospel.”

What we want to do and what we can do are two different things.

Every minute spent on an unnecessary conflict is wasted ministry opportunity.

When you know why God put you somewhere... criticism loses its power.

More Context on the Hope Effect...

The “Hope Effect” story usually refers to **Curt P. Richter’s** 1950s experiments at **Johns Hopkins University**, reported in his 1957 paper “**On the Phenomenon of Sudden Death in Animals and Man**”. It is often retold as a study about *mice*, but the original accounts are generally about **rats**, not mice.

In simple terms, **Richter placed rats in containers of water and observed how long they struggled before drowning**. Some rats died very quickly, especially wild rats that—despite being strong swimmers—seemed to stop struggling within minutes. Richter connected this to a state of “hopelessness”: the animals were in a situation where they had no apparent escape, so they appeared to “give up.”

The part that became famous as the “Hope Experiment” came when rats were **removed from the water just before exhaustion**, dried off, allowed to rest, and then placed back in the water. Popular summaries report that after this “rescue” experience, some rats swam dramatically longer—sometimes described as lasting up to **60 hours**—because they had experienced that rescue was possible. [e-motivation.net],

The common lesson people draw is: **hope changes endurance**. The rats did not suddenly become stronger; rather, the prior experience of rescue seemed to alter their persistence.

Paul’s hope was not optimism that circumstances would improve; it was confidence that Christ could use even prison to advance the gospel.

Looking back at Paul’s delays, chains, hardships, and criticism, where is God asking you to respond faithfully instead of measuring His goodness by your circumstances?

LIVE IT OUT

Bible Study should ALWAYS lead to taking action with what you learned. Think of it as Vitamin A. "Application" into your day, week and interactions.

Here are some practical ways to live out this week's message in each area:

In Our Homes

Choose joy over complaint when plans change or life feels inconvenient.

Ask, "How might God use this?" instead of only asking, "Why is this happening?"

Encourage faith in your family by talking about where you see God working, even in hard things.

Pray together for courage, not just comfort or easier circumstances.

Model hope for your children or spouse by responding faithfully instead of fearfully.

In Our Church

Serve without comparison—celebrate when God uses someone else instead of feeling overlooked.

Encourage someone who is struggling by reminding them their hardship may still have gospel purpose.

Refuse unnecessary conflict so ministry energy is not wasted on rivalry or criticism.

Be bold to speak the Word because someone else's faithfulness can make courage contagious.

Look for people God has placed "around you in this"—new guests, hurting members, volunteers, or leaders who need encouragement.

In Our Workplaces

Reframe frustrating circumstances as opportunities to show patience, integrity, and faith.

Let your response to hardship be a witness, especially when others are watching.

Avoid rivalry and comparison by working with humility and excellence.

Speak hope gently when coworkers are discouraged, without forcing the conversation.

Remember your “chains” may be your assignment—God may use where you are, even if it is not where you wanted to be.

In Our Community

Notice people in hardship—neighbors, servers, teachers, first responders, or families under pressure.

Offer practical encouragement, such as a meal, note, prayer, visit, or helping hand.

Look for gospel opportunities in ordinary places: ball fields, grocery stores, schools, restaurants, and neighborhoods.

Be known as someone who brings peace instead of criticism.

Live with visible hope, showing that Christ changes not only where we will spend eternity, but how we live today.

This week, where has God placed you—not where you planned to be, but where you actually are—and who around you needs to see the hope of Christ through your response?

Remember:

“We are to run the race with endurance, not in our own strength, but by fixing our gaze on Jesus. He is not only the goal of our faith—He is the source and sustainer of it.” R.C. Sproul

“The gospel is not only about changing WHERE you will live for eternity, it’s also about changing HOW you will live today.” Shane Pruitt
And that is a heart change. So that we glorify God in all we do.

Having Jesus as Savior will cost you nothing. Having Jesus as Savior will cost you everything. How so?

Who do you say God is? You cannot "come after" Jesus unless you come to Him.

Two roads stand before us in this world today. There is the way of the divine things of our Lord, which is the way of Christ. And there is the way of human things of the world. There is a way to save your life, and you will lose it there. And there is a way to lose your life for the sake of the Kingdom, and there you will find it.

How do we follow Jesus' ways? First of all, we turn from our sin and entrust our lives to Him as our Savior and Lord. Then, we seek His will in His Word each day and put it into practice by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. We learn to deny our selfish desires and give ourselves completely to following Jesus.

This choice we have — to seek first the kingdom of God — is the fundamental choice everyone makes when they first repent and turn to Jesus Christ. Yet every day after that, our Christian life will either reinforce that decision or deny it.

Remember the gospel is personal. Your changed life shows that to others around you based on what happened at the cross. You are at a crossroads if you have not accepted Christ. Which road are you traveling on right now? Are you on God's side?



Are you in a Growth Group at First Baptist? In this isolated world, Growth Groups help people connect in a healthy way. God has created us for a deep longing for community. We grow when we are living out our faith in a small group with others and we do this by

loving, caring for, and encouraging each other. If you have any questions about our Growth Groups, contact the Church Office for more information.