



WOW: Word Of the Week

Progress

June 21, 2021

Phil. 1:12-14, 25-27. "I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served for the **progress** of the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much bolder to speak the word without fear."

"Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your **progress** and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel."

In Philippians 1:12-26, Paul uses an interesting construction, calling attention to the passage by introducing it and closing it with the same word. I describe it as a grammatical parenthesis. He writes with joy about the progress of the gospel. He is committed to progress and joy in the faith of the Philippians in the faith.

Twice a year, I take time to evaluate and adjust my personal spiritual goals, the goals of my ministry and mission efforts. I review the progress of the gospel and the progress in the faith that I desire for myself, my family, and my faith family.

The past year—now 15 months plus--has been interesting, challenging. Progress has been difficult on many fronts. Have you seen the gospel grow and expand, touch people for Christ, advance and make fresh progress? Or have you seen the gospel stagnate with little evidence of exciting progress? As we evaluate and adjust, we have to ask hard questions. Why? How? When? Where? We are called to examine our methods.

How is your spiritual life, the spirituality of your family? Thinking about your own family, your own spiritual life, the spiritual family, have you seen progress and joy in the faith, or has this been a year of standing still and marking time?

When I consider the power of God in my life and in the world, I find it frustrating to stand still and mark time. The gospel is God's power in season and out of season. Paul was in prison. The Philippian church had internal strife, probably a bit of timidity, perhaps some selfishness. If we cannot advance the gospel out of season, we will likely struggle to see progress in season. The same is true in our spiritual lives. What happens is more the result of what is within us than of what is around us in our circumstances.

In some places, during the last 15 months, the gospel has advanced incredibly. More than a few Christians have commented to me that the new rhythms of life have opened fresh vistas for Bible study and prayer.

In closing, I paraphrase Paul.

I want you to know that what has happened has in many places has served to advance the gospel so that it has become known to extended families and in new locations. Many have become more confident to speak the word of God, even among new Christians.

I pray for your progress and joy in the faith.