

Progress and Joy in the Faith
2008 OVU Lectureship
April 6-9, 2008; Monday morning keynote address

Introduction

It is a thrill to see progress, evidence of progress in whatever aspect of life.

Families, children, past students, churches, colleges/universities, friends

It is a joy to see progress at OVU: students, facilities, dreams fulfilled. Especially true for those of us who have returned for this event; we are remembering the investment we made, the blood/sweat/tears; the challenges, the victories.

Life is built on dreams/hopes/anticipation....

Dream at OVU

Dream of effective ministry, missions, churches

Dream of church leaders

My text reflects a dream: 1:21, what we want to believe about ourselves.

It is what we want to say about our faith, but is it true? To live is Christ? To die is gain?

Reasons for studying Philippians

Understand joy, real joy, search for tranquility, meaning, significance, relationship.

The coming of the gospel to Philippi: Acts 16.

Philippians is a special church for Paul; a "Philippi person" refers to someone supportive.

Now Paul is a prisoner.

Purpose of letter

NICNT, Fee, 1995: Hortatory letter of friendship, less from the friendship form, more from the friendship rhetoric

Paul is sending back Epaphroditus

Paul is advising his friends at Philippi of his circumstances

Paul is warning of false teaching

Paul is admonishing steadfastness and unity

The Text

*My assigned text is 1:21-30. The first half of my text (1:21-26) is part of an inclusio....

*Markus Bockmuehl, in *Black's NT Commentary*, calls this description of Paul's situation (1:12-26) a narratio

*The paragraph is in 12-26, followed by an exhortation which introduces the rest of the chapter.

1:1-20, Paul's ambition is that Christ be glorified.

"I want you to know...."

Phil 1:12—to advance the gospel; Phil. 1:25—for the advance and joy of the Philippians in the faith

I especially like the outline in *Intl Greek Testament Commentary*, Peter O'Brien (Australia)

1:12-26, the priority of the gospel: (1) *Progress of the gospel*; (2) *Preaching the gospel/Christ from different motives*; (3) *For the glory of Christ*; (4) *In life or in death*; (5) *For the progress of the Philippians*

Presentation Outline

I will take three key words from the text as the foundation for what the text communicates and what I wish to say. How will Christ be glorified? What brings progress for the gospel and progress and joy in the faith? What are the things that matter in the gospel mission? (borrowed from Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians*)

1* The priority (power) of the gospel
Not the facts but the effects of his imprisonment, note “the disclosure form”
Rejoicing in the progress of the gospel; the progress of the gospel is serving to confirm the gospel and its power.

WORD: apologia, defense

Is a legal term, court matter, technical. Josephus uses the word to refer to a court action. M&M: “write me a report/accounting of the sheep.” 2 Tim. 4:16, at my first defense (=hearing?). Not to be seen as a battle term, different kind of defense. How does the gospel need defending?

Our word “defense” appears also in 1:7, defense and confirmation of the gospel. With single article, one event. Confirmation/defense. A successful defense would confirm. Today it often refers to telling what is wrong, but the 1st c. NT reference is more to telling why one is right. The Philippians share in the defense of the gospel—not of the messenger, but of the message.

The gospel is not dependent upon us for its power; we can preach harder, work harder, try harder, confront more diligently. But that is not where the power lies: the gospel applied and lived out is demonstration and confirmation of its power. Rather than the gospel depending on us, we depend on the gospel.

What is suggested here is a demonstration of the impact of the gospel, the intricacy of God’s work, the unusual, the unexpected, the evidence. The power of the gospel in spite of difficulties. The unseen, the permeating power.

“I am set”, lit., from keimai, I am here, but substitutes for unusual passive of tithemi. I am placed here; I am destined.

Those who work in the gospel have a destiny in that gospel. God is working out his will and his pleasure.

Paul’s own situation does not matter; the progress of the gospel does, 12-18a.

18b-20, move from present joy over the preaching of Christ to his future joy regarding his imprisonment, final vindication, and honoring of Christ in all circumstances.

In nothing I will be ashamed....Christ will be glorified....

The issues of life and death are subordinate to Christ’s glory

Thus come, in vv. 21-24, stirring personal confession. How precious when this confession is ours.

Special verses at times when death is imminent or seems imminent.

Series of contrasting statements which can be arranged in parallel

21a	life	for to me to live Christ
21b	death	and (to me) to die gain
22	life	so...if life in the flesh (ck Gal 2:20 s)
23	death	or...to die and with Christ to be
24	life	to remain in the flesh

21a	life	is Christ	is Christ
21b	death	is gain	is gain
22	life	is worthwhile work	if I am to live on....
23	death	is to be with Christ	my desire is to be with Christ
24	life	is for the benefit of others	my responsibility requires my presence

This confession makes clear the result of the priority of the gospel. Paul is hemmed in, a genuine dilemma...

The priority of the gospel will always bring us to be about life.

2* How progress occurs

WORD: prokopto. Metaphorical word; Kittel suggests was first a nautical term, to make headway against opposing winds or forces. We may think of pioneers, trailblazers cutting a way before an army and furthering its march. Far from hurting the cause of the gospel, Paul's sufferings and restraints helped it, far from slowing it, they advanced it. Paul is not concerned with himself, but with the gospel. Not his progress, but the progress of the gospel. "That which has happened to me" is almost a studied vagueness.

Progress happens in unexpected ways—his imprisonment had advanced the gospel. We have here an example of serendipity. The opponents sought one thing, but got another.

Progress in one arena encourages progress in another; the integrity of the Christian endeavor; progress and joy alike characterize faith. The success of the gospel is for Paul coupled with the obvious progress or advance of the Philippians in the faith. Here we see the foundation of Paul's continuing focus on joy or rejoicing. This is not happiness, ha-ha-ha; this is a reasoned, thoughtful joy, that comes from knowing the priorities of life, and seeing God's purpose fulfilled.

Paul's future joy is based on what he knows: deliverance/vindication.

Progress comes when God (through someone) intervenes. It was perhaps the lack of progress and joy at Philippi that made it necessary for Paul to return to them.

3* The importance of perseverance

Analyzing the exhortation....

So Paul will know....

- Stand firm
- Contending in unity for the faith of the gospel
- Not frightened by opponents

So opponents will know....

- God's destruction or judgment

So Philippians will know....

- Belief
- Suffering
- Shared struggle

Whatever....

Conduct worthy of the gospel, live = politeuesthe.

WORD: politeuesthe, live. Main verb of the exhortation, 27-30.

To Greek, state was not just place to live, but was sort of partnership to help people attain the highest good. Develop gifts, realize potential, but not in isolation but in cooperation. To live as a citizen, to live worthy of the gospel was both rights and privileges as well as duties and responsibilities.

Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians: “If we are his worthy citizens (politeusometha axios), we shall also reign with him” (5.2).

We are held to a “worthy” standard, ethical mandate. The gospel sets this ethical norm in the context of the shared life. The Christian life is shaped by things of greater value.

Paul is aware of the intense struggle against hostile powers. Ralph Martin suggests each are military terms: stand firm as resolute as soldiers at their post, striving as in a military contest whether in battle or in the arena, opponents as adversaries, conflict.

To live in this way means....

to fulfill obligations of help and encouragement to others

to live in harmony with one another

to contend against enemies together

Conclusion

Herein is great encouragement. Here is confidence, here is hope for the future. Here is genuine rejoicing. Progress and joy in the faith.

Commentary Resources

~Black’s NT Commentary, Markus Bockmuehl

1:12-26: Paul’s situation, narratio

Effect of P’s captivity, motivations for preaching, Christian confidence

1:27: worthy citizens

Exhortation to stability in the faith, steadfastness

~Word Biblical Commentary, Gerald Hawthorne, Wheaton College

1:12-2:30, news and instructions

~Hendricksen

Imprisonment for the advantage of the gospel, Paul’s circumstances whether life or death magnify Christ for the advantage of the faith of the church, exhortation to steadfastness and unity and fearlessness

~NICNT, Jacobus Muller, 1955

1:12-26, personal circumstances of the apostle

1:27-2:18, exhortation

1:27-2:4, admonition to unity, steadfastness, and humility

~NICNT, Fee, 1995

Hortatory letter of friendship, less from the friendship form, more from the friendship rhetoric

1:12-26, Paul’s affairs, reflections on the imprisonment

The present, For the advance of the gospel—the gospel advance inside and outside the prison, it advances outside the prison despite ill will

The future, For the advance of the Philippians, for the glory of Christ

1:27-2:18, the affairs of the Philippians, exhortations

Outline (mine): what I see in the present, what I see in the future, therefore....

~Intl Greek Testament Commentary, Peter O'Brien, Australia

1:12-26, the priority of the gospel for Paul

Progress of the gospel

Preaching the gospel/Christ from different motives

For the glory of Christ

In life or in death

For the progress of the Philippians

1:27-2:18, exhortations and example

Therefore, unity and courage in the face of opposition

Other Resources

Cloer, 44: a Philippi person

Cloer, 35: read the text, departing to be with Christ, || Jan's dad's death in 1:21-24 (or 22-24)