



I press on
toward the goal to
win the prize for
which God has
called me
heavenward
in Christ
Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philipians ...

Greater Progress of the Gospel

It takes a special set of programming for the proclaimer of the gospel not to lose heart. Most of the seed that is sown falls on hard ground and never gets a start, and a high percentage of that which takes root is either rapidly blasted away by the events of the day or choked out by the challenges of life. "And the seed [sown] in the good soil," said Jesus, "these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance" (Luke 8:15). These words need to be run carefully through the mind; the only type of people who

are going to be good seed are those who have an honest and good heart, who can hold the word fast or tightly through all kinds of challenges and difficulties, and who can do their part to keep spreading the word and to keep on and to keep on and to keep on. There are, said Jesus, tares in the midst of the wheat, and bad fish as well as good fish in the net. The apostle Paul noted that even God would send a deluding influence through the church to separate the truth-seekers from the others, "in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness" (2 Thessalonians 2:12). Most people are heedless of the call, and among those who hear the call of the gospel, "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). So it takes a special set of programming for the proclaimer of the gospel not to lose heart. And the apostle Paul was perhaps the supreme example of one who had done his part to maintain a positive perspective in the midst of such massive and eternal losses.

- ▼ **Looking at circumstances** — Here's the great apostle Paul, powerful and prolific preacher, great teacher and motivator, in jail in Rome. How does his special set of programming play out in these circumstances? "Now I want you to know, brethren" he encourages, "that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel" (Philippians 1:12). What a guy!!! He is able to peer through a pretty murky set of events and see "greater progress" for the gospel! His years of dealing with the disappointments with the extensive rejection of the gospel on the part of his fellow Jews, his undergoing the physical beatings and persecutions on behalf of his Lord, his seeing the problems in the local congregations, his watching numbers of brethren fall away, and yet finding the positives in all that, prepared him for the last years of his life in jail, as a "prisoner of Christ Jesus." Though that mental discipline, and learning to trust the Lord, Paul thus sees the progress of the gospel in his imprisonment!

PAUL'S POSITIVE
PERSPECTIVE AND HIS
PERSONAL TRUST IN
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- ▼ **Positive multipliers** — God indeed causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose. "My imprisonment," notes the apostle, "in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear" (Philippians 1:13,14). His unjust imprisonment turned out to be advertising for the gospel. And the brethren took courage, considering that since Paul in prison kept on talking about the Christ, they on the outside could evangelize as well.

Paul's positive perspective and his personal trust in the Lord greatly impacted the brethren. Instead of being all upset and saying, "Did you hear what the Romans did to Paul? He's unjustly in prison; we just don't have the freedom to preach like we used to," they actually took courage and stepped up the distribution of the word of God. May we go and do likewise!!

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