



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Exalting God with Your Life (Phil 1:12-30)

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Bible studies for legislators are held Tuesday mornings at 8:30am in 514 CLOB. All Senator and House Members, all Democrats and all Republicans, are invited for a time of study and prayer on Tuesday mornings. The weekly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. (Time and/or location for lobbyists and Capitol staff are still to be determined. If you can help, please let me know.)

The current study for the 2010 General Assembly is the Book of Philippians. The previous weekly study examined the Apostle Paul's thanks, prayer, and confidence in God. I pray that this study will be invigorating to you. I am here to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as an evidence of my desire to be serving you.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

At the very beginning of these Bible studies in the Capitol for the 2010 General Assembly, I would like to communicate the biblical goals of my ministry service to you and with you. The Apostle Paul articulated several of these goals as he petitioned God on behalf of the church. He was thankful for their Christian life, fellowship in the gospel, and confidence in the sovereign work of God in their lives. He then prayed that that their love would abound "still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment" so that the church would approve the best things of life from the many good things in life, for the purpose of being "sincere and blameless until the day of Christ," and to be fruitful in righteousness "to the glory and praise of God."

Introduction

As the word is used thirteen times in Philippians, the theme of this epistle is "joy." Moreover, since Christ is mentioned thirty-eight times, the content for such joy is evident: "rejoicing in the Lord." The

epistle even contains an example of Jesus, "who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2). Verses 12-30 are the second part of the section that teaches how to rejoice in extreme difficulties, which is directly applicable to the entire Capitol community.

Many are tired and weary from weekly budget hearings. Elected officials feel the pressure to make loving and necessary decisions for Georgia with "real knowledge and all discernment" (to quote the words of Phil 1:9). As Philippians 1:12 begins with the Apostle's description of his own affliction and how the sovereign Lord God used it for the advancement of his will and purpose, may this week's Bible study be an encouragement to all whose confidence is in the providence of God.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

WHERE IS GOD IN THE MIDST OF DIFFICULTIES?

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- (1) God is never unaware or lacking in power, but always working all events for the furtherance of His will and purpose.
- (2) God is in the difficulties, and often advances the gospel and matures His people through challenges.
- (3) God is not one to ever abandon His people. Believers are never alone, and therefore should seek *first* the opportunity to exalt God with their lives, and pray for good for all involved in difficulty.

(1:12-20) Following his statement of trust in God, the Apostle Paul expressed his knowledge that his imprisonment was "in the cause of Christ." By comparing his meetings with Felix, Festus, and Agrippa (Acts 23:24; 25:1-27; 26:1-32), it is apparent that Paul's imprisonment in Rome was unfair and unjust. Paul was in prison for two years waiting for his case to be considered. Moreover, some were "preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will" (Phil 1:15).

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES -- GEORGIA

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30AM, 514 CLOB
LOBBYISTS: TIME AND ROOM TBD, CAPITOL BUILDING
STAFF: TUESDAYS @ NOON, ROOM TBD

ENVY AND STRIFE	GOOD WILL
Selfish Ambition	From Love
Impure Motives	Knowing the Will of God
Whether in Pretense or in Truth, Christ is Proclaimed; and in this I Rejoice	

Believers may experience similar situations as the Apostle Paul. A promotion may be deserved, but not received. A necessity of life should have been obtained, but it is not. Life is not always fair and just, but God is always sovereignly at work to accomplish His will. It is crucial to know that God often advances His purposes through difficulty. As opposed to anxiety, bitterness, or complaining, the believer should seek opportunities to exalt God in the midst of troubles. Difficulties in life are not meaningless, but purposeful. While the outworking of evil and bad motivations may obscure understanding the will of God, the believer may always be confident that God intends the troubles of life to be for good.

THE BEST END RESULT IS ALWAYS THE OUTCOME FROM HONORING THE LORD.

It is crucial in the believer's life to never lose faith or confidence in God, but know that the Lord (according to His timing) will reveal what He is accomplishing through difficulties. In the present, seek whatever small or great opportunities exist to exalt God. Even though some were motivated by selfish ambition, Paul could rejoice that Christ was proclaimed. God can use individuals such as Balaam (Numb 22) and Caiaphas (John 11:49-52) to advance the proclamation of His Word. The first priority in life is Godward. The message is do not complain regarding unfair and unjust situations, but live for the glory and praise of God even at your own expense. Through prayers and the provision of the Holy Spirit (1:19), maintain "all boldness" to honor and not disgrace God. The best end result is always the outcome from honoring the Lord.

COURAGE AND ENDURANCE IN UNITY

(1:21-30) With "earnest expectation," Paul desired release from wrongful imprisonment. He confessed that despite the outcome, living was in the person and work of Christ, whether he would be with Him in heaven ("to die is gain") or remain on earth "in the flesh" (1:21-24). Although the former is "very much better" for him (1:21, 23), the latter "*will mean* fruitful labor" for others which is more necessary for their sake (1:22, 24). The welfare of others above one's own is the corollary to such a perspective, and therefore what is exalting to God.

HOW BELIEVERS RESPOND TO ADVERSE SITUATIONS IS EVIDENCE OF THE REALITY OF THEIR SALVATION (CF. LUKE 1:74; 1 JOHN 4:18).

As a consequence of his current experience, Paul was able to exhort the Philippians to be confident (1:25-26), stand "firm in one spirit" (1:27-28), and be willing to endure suffering for the sake of the Lord (1:29-30). The reason for these exhortations is to assure the church of their salvation "from the same experience as brought conviction to the world."¹ How believers respond to adverse situations is evidence of the reality of their salvation (cf. Luke 1:74; 1 John 4:18). The same Greek word, *endeixis* ("sign"), is applied to both the opponents and believers. "Standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the sake of the gospel" (Phil 1:27) was a sign against the opponents and that those in unity were recipients of eternal "salvation" (1:28). Moreover, the unity against opposition strengthens those in such unity, and such an attitude is an indication of the salvation experience. How we respond to difficulty matters greatly.

In every case the idea is of an undeniable manifestation of reality. It is not possible for a Christian to stand firm under persecution and for the world to dismiss it as nothing. It is evidence of a supernatural power. Consequently, it is a token of salvation to the Christian and of destruction to those who will not believe.²

Opposition can overwhelm human character. The believer, however, has experienced a supernatural work in his or her life to overcome the challenges of life as evidence to both other believers and even to those who do not believe the gospel.

¹ J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984) 99.

² James Montgomery Boice, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000) 93.