

Learning to Live as if God is in Control

12/1/25- Philippians 1 (part 1)

Over the next few months we will be studying the book of Philippians. The apostle Paul wrote this letter while a prisoner in Rome. Paul helped to start the church in Philippi (Acts 16) and had even been thrown into jail and miraculously released while there. This is approximately ten years later, the church had sent Epaphroditus with a gift of money to support Paul while in prison, and this is his letter of thanks and encouragement to them.

Paul is encouraging the people how to live together in testing times. God's people will ALWAYS face challenges, difficulties and opposition. The church in Philippi was a 'successful' church, but it still faced difficulties. We often think that if we have difficulties it is because we are doing something wrong and we are no longer in God's will but, even when we are doing everything right and obeying what God has called us to do, we can still face opposition, persecution and struggles. Paul, even while a prisoner, is encouraging people that there is a connection between joy and suffering.

- *What is a 'storm' that you have gone through in your life?*
- *What/who helped you through it?*
- *What did you learn about God during this time?*

There are 4 things Paul teaches in this first chapter about how to deal with difficulties:

1. Pray for others: Read vs 1 - 11

Paul sets an example by praying for others in spite of his suffering and imprisonment.

His prayer is that they can have love, discern the best, be pure and blameless and filled with God's fruit of righteousness.

Christian maturity is rejoicing even when things aren't going right or how we would like, not drowning in self-pity, but showing concern for others and praying for them even in the midst of our own struggles.

- *how easy do you find it to reach out to others when you are going through tough times?*
- *Is it easier to help or to ask for help at these times?*

Something practical: Pray for Paul, the elders and others daily - there are prayer needs in the newsletter.

2. Put God's priorities first: Read vs 12 - 18

Paul recognised that God was using his situation for His glory even though he was imprisoned. The gospel was still being preached in spite of his chains. In fact Paul's chains had made other people more confident to preach the gospel. Paul recognised that God was in control and the gospel of Christ being preached was more important than his comfort.

Submission to the will of God is surrender to His will even when we can't see it. We can always pray with joy because God is in control. Our comfort and safety should not be the most important thing in our life. Our highest priority is to know God, know His will and obey Him. Paul's priorities were in line with God's perspective, he could see things from a heavenly perspective.

BEING A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST
DOESN'T MAKE ME IMMUNE TO
BROKENNESS, PAIN, OR HARDSHIP.
IT JUST MEANS I HAVE AN ANCHOR
TO HOLD ME IN THE STORM.

@CrownedCrowning

- *How do you feel about the statement: "If God is in control, then I am not"?*
- *To what extent does God have control of your life at the moment? (On a scale of 1-10)*

Something practical: next time things are tough ask God "Where are You in this situation?" Ask God to show you areas where you still need to surrender to Him.

3. Trust God for the outcome: Read vs 19 - 26

Faith is focussed on God's purposes - He is interested in the outcomes, not just the events that produce the outcome. Everything that happens to you, including sickness and difficulties, will be used for God's glory. Our own personal outcome is not important - only God's outcome. Paul recognised this when he said that whether he lives or dies, God will be glorified. Paul's life was to be spent in service to God's kingdom, not for himself.

- *How selfish/self pitying are you about your struggles?*
- *Do you see yourself as an active co-labourer with God for His kingdom?*

Something practical: next time things are tough ask God "What are You doing through this situation, is there a 'big picture' that I am missing?"

4. Unity in difficulty: Read vs 27 - 30

Paul was concerned that the people would conduct themselves in a manner that was 'worthy of the gospel' in spite of their suffering - because it was for God's glory that they go through trials together, that all would suffer the suffering and glory of Christ, just as he was.

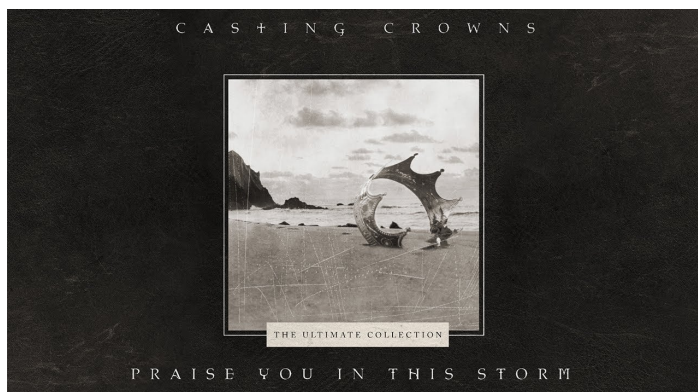
Going through difficulties is never an excuse to be ungodly or unloving. A bold response to difficulties is a sign of the kingdom of God. Paul saw his imprisonment as a chance to express Christ's love. Paul lived through his sufferings in a way that showed that He knew that God was in control.

- *How do you respond differently to struggles because you know Jesus?*
- *Does your daily life actually look like you believe the gospel that you claim to believe?*
- *Do you tend to isolate when you are going through struggles or can you reach out to others?*

Something practical: Ask God to show you, as a small group, how you can best support each other to love each other in practical ways.

Please continue to pray for Paul and the elders, especially during this time of transition.

Pray that God would show the leadership teams of both churches how to put Him first, how to seek to understand and see things from HIS perspective, how to be joyful in the struggles and loving towards each other at all times. Amen



Worship:

Casting Crowns "Praise You in the storm"