

Sermon Topic: Care, Chains and the Cross by Pr Wendy Chiang, 15 April 2018  
 Sermon Text: Philippians 1: 3-19

### Introduction

What is an Epistle?

- A letter by Apostle(s) → a person/group of persons
- Contains community concerns: affirmation, encouragement, instruction or correction
- Written by Paul, Peter, John, James and Jude
- Out of 27 books in the New Testament, 21 are Epistles

Letter to Philippians- A Background

- Audience: Addressed to Philippi (the Philippians), who knew Christ through Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey
- Author & Context: Paul; written during Paul's arrest in Rome
- Courier: Epaphroditus
- Features: There are 2 words/ideas repeated in this letter - Joy and Attitude. While we should seek to apply the lessons learnt to our own lives, we should think about the intended message to the original recipients as well.

### A. Paul shared about his **pining** and **prayer**, for the believers in Philippi.

*"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for **ALL OF YOU**, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now... it is right for me to feel this way about **ALL OF YOU**, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, **ALL OF YOU** share in God's grace with me... I long for ALL OF YOU with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer (for ALL OF YOU)..." (v3-11)*

- There was mutual love and support between Paul and the Philippians.
  - Because of our common salvation in Christ Jesus, we can uphold each other in our minds ('I remember you') and hearts ('I long for'). The phrase 'I have you in my heart' in Greek conveys that this is both ways— as I have you in my heart, you also have me in your heart.
  - Paul repeats the phrase "all of you" 4 times – Encompassing all the believers. Paul knew they also had the same deep affection for him
- They were his partners and partakers in ministry. They supplicated, supported and served alongside him.
  - Paul was awaiting trial before the Romans and was not in the same geographical region as Philippi. How could this affection run so deep?
  - The Philippians were his partners in the defence and proclamation of the gospel, and whatever happened to him would also affect them as well.
- They were generous and loyal.
  - The Philippians supported Paul with financial giving (practical help) as well as their prayers

**Lesson One: If Christian love is the evidence of salvation, then it cannot remain disguised or hidden. It cannot be superficial or sentimental.** It goes beyond sharing meals, small talk and shaking hands to extending forgiveness and genuine concern for others. It has to be present in our minds, hearts and prayers.

<Application>

Pray for One Another-

i. Pray for faithful love (v 9-10)

A love that is not biased or blind but discerning. A love that is associated with moral insight and moral knowledge to know "what is best, pure and blameless till Jesus returns.

ii. Pray for fruitfulness (v11)

A lifestyle that exhibits good and kind things which show us to be a child of God, for this brings much glory and praise to the Lord.

B. Paul shared about his **chains**, his **critics** and his **crisis** to the believers in Philippi.

*"I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that **I am in chains for Christ**. Because of **my chains**, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the Word of God more courageously and fearlessly... some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love... the former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while **I am in chains**. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this, I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance" (v 12-19)*

- Chains

→ Paul was not afraid to share he was in chains. His crime: Preaching the cause of Christ, which then created controversy and contention for Jewish leaders and Roman Empire.

- Critics

→ Paul was aware that he had critics who preached not false doctrine, but out of false motives (v15-17).

- (Rejoice in) Crisis

→ For man's salvation, Paul was glad to be in chains. He did not complain, but rejoiced (v18), because people need the Lord, and God's Word, God's Will and God's ways were getting out to the people. God's Word cannot be chained or bound and Paul did not want the Philippians to be afraid or ignorant (vs 12 & 19).

→ Paul could rejoice because he knew that the prayer of the saints and the provision of Jesus Christ would deliver him from cowardice of chains (v19).

**Lesson Two: God uses chains for good. Your chains at the workplace and playground can be platforms to bring someone closer to Jesus.** Jesus and Paul both suffered for the gospel, and we are not exempt (ref. v29). While we may not face physical chains, we might suffer in

different forms for the gospel. However, God can use chains for good – they can be a platform to bring someone closer to Christ.

“...banish professionalism from our midst and to put in passionate prayer, poverty of spirit, hunger for God, rigorous study of holy things, white-hot devotion to Jesus Christ, utter indifference to material gain, and unremitting labor to rescue the perishing, perfect the saints, glorify our sovereign Lord and be witnesses and partakers of the suffering of Christ.”

– John Piper

#### <One Application>

Come alongside to play a role in the life of our pastor's preacher's work through:

- your actions (you are an extension of God's message that we preach. Your response to God's Word and God's work outside of church makes a difference)
- your attitude and your affections (Rom 10:15; 1 Cor 9:14)

“Stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the Gospel” – Phil 1: 27b

#### **Questions for Reflection and Application:**

- 1) What things, specifically, does Paul pray for in verses 9-10? How do these things compare with your priorities as a Christian?
- 2) If we have one another in our heart, how would it affect the way we relate to one another, especially in their difficult moments?
- 3) What was Paul's "crime"? What are "true motives" for preaching the gospel mentioned in v12-18?
- 4) In what ways can we conduct our lives in a way worthy of the Gospel mentioned in v27?
- 5) What is God saying about your action/attitude/affection towards those who bring God's Word to you?

