

Text: Phil 1.25-26

I am trying to work through these verses in some detail in our meditations so I can help prepare you for our upcoming quizzing.

Consequently, it is just Phil 1.25-26 this afternoon. We will start reading in v. 12, however.

Read Phil 1.12-26

I will review a bit of the material we've covered in a minute, but I want to first talk about my title.

The Ministry of Paul in the Churches

Paul is speaking about Philippi particularly, but words like this could apply to any of churches.

I think they could also apply to the relationship between any good pastor and the people the Lord gives him to lead. I hesitate a little in talking about "a good pastor" lest anyone come up and tell me I am good (or bad!). I'm not fishing for compliments.

In our early days, I think I made a lot of mistakes. Lately, I am *less aware* of mistakes, and I hope that means I'm getting better at it. But this isn't about me, it's about a proper view and practice of ministry.

Here are some characteristics of a good pastor/people relationship:

- The pastor is concerned for the spiritual welfare of the people
- The pastor willingly gives up his time, at any time, to help those who are hurting (think of the lost sheep portrait)
- The pastor labours constantly in the word to have truth and Spirit-filled insight to feed the people
- The people hunger for the word, take it to heart, try to assimilate it
- The people join with the pastor in ministry, filling in the many roles that make a church run
- The people earnestly pray for souls, reach out to visitors, speak for the Lord as they have opportunity
- Together pastor and people look for leaders for the next generation

There are probably more things, but I think healthy churches try to cultivate this atmosphere. I think Paul had this relationship with his churches, even Corinth (!!) but especially Philippi.

Proposition: The default pastoral mindset has the spiritual profit of God's people as the center of thinking.

I. The reason for pastoral continuance (25a)

A. Paul looks back over what he has said "convinced of this"

1. His life is always useful for the gospel, despite circumstances (12-13)
2. His example prompts others to speak (14-18)
3. His circumstances will turn out for the good [deliverance = salvation] (19)
4. His commitment is the glory of Christ, whether by life or death (20)
5. He knows that continued life will mean fruitful labour (22)
6. And he knows his ministry is needful for the Philippians (24)

We don't know the circumstances of Philippi, but Paul perceived there was still benefit to them for him to remain.

Some people say that a pastor should have a sense of call in order to stick it out in the ministry. I think he should have a burden for the need of the people.

- Consider Jonah: he knew he was called, but he didn't care for the people to whom he was called

B. Because of these things, Paul knows he will continue

1. The word "know" gives us no clue of divine revelation
 - a. In 2 Pt 1.14, Peter mentions that he knew from the Lord he would die soon
 - b. Paul has a similar sense in 2 Tim 4.16
 - c. But nothing here
2. Rather, Paul's "knowledge" comes from his own evaluation of the situation
 - a. The Philippians (and others) still have a need for Paul's ministry
 - b. Therefore, Paul will continue

The idea of retirement never crossed Paul's mind, apparently.

The need of the people was "top of mind" — this drove him on.

II. The purpose of pastoral continuance (25b)

A. For your progress

1. Word development

- a. Originally seems to be a nautical term, progress of a ship against contrary winds
- b. Came to mean progress of the individual in any course of life
 - 1) Might have the idea of prosperity, success, despite odds
 - 2) Also has a negative idea, one could progress in evil

2. Word usage (3x in NT) [related term more frequent]

- a. 1 Tim 4.15: Paul wanted Timothy's progress to be evident to all (his success in developing the prophetic gift)
- b. Phil 1.12: Paul's imprisonment has furthered the progress of the gospel (success, prosperity)
- c. Here in our passage

3. Paul wants them to progress spiritually

- a. There is always opposition: the world, the flesh, the devil
- b. He wants to encourage progress, pushing forward against opposition

B. For your joy

1. Progress produces joy

2. The things of the faith should rejoice the heart

3. The pastor, above all, wants to see people living in "joy in the faith"

III. The mutual fellowship of pastoral continuance (26)

A. The joy of their reunion described

1. "Proud confidence" = "boasting, pride"
 - a. The word seems odd, as we have a negative connotation, and indeed pride is negative in the NT
 - b. Yet it does have a positive sense when Christians rejoice in one another

2 Cor 1.14 just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

2. Paul says his continuance will allow their boasting to abound "through my coming"
 - a. The word "coming" = *parousia*
 - b. This word is used for the coming of Christ as a technical term
 - c. History of the word
 - 1) Basic meaning: "presence"
 - 2) Came to mean "anticipated presence" or "coming" of a royal figure
 - 3) When a *parousia* was in the offing (of some king), much preparation would occur
 - a) Decorations
 - b) Infrastructure (e.g., improve the roads the king would arrive on)
 - c) Prepare receptions, ceremonies
 - d. Paul means, you will boast in my arrival with rejoicing ... "in Christ Jesus"

B. The center of this rejoicing is in Christ Jesus

1. Both pastor and people anticipate mutual fellowship
2. The ground of the fellowship is Christ Jesus
3. The fruit of such fellowship is, no doubt, more spiritual progress

Conclusion:

Proposition: The default pastoral mindset has the spiritual profit of God's people as the center of thinking.

Paul's heart was for the spiritual progress and benefit of his dear friends, the Philippians.

This is a pastoral heart and that is why he knew he still had something to give them.

We should cultivate the mutual joy of progress in Christ so that Christ can progress in our community.