

## Philippians: *The Affection of Jesus Christ*

By Pastor Tom Harrison

Philippians 1:1-18a

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Paul visited Philippi on his second missionary journey (around A.D. 49-51). He wrote to them while he was in prison (at Caesarea Maritima, Ephesus, or Rome) between A.D. 55 and 62. Had he gone east, instead of west, things might have been very different for Christianity. Paul was a major player in the spread of our faith.

We'll read from Acts 16 this week. Three socio-economic classes of people in this chapter display the diversity of the gospel. Lydia was a wealthy woman. There was a slave girl possessed by evil. The Philippian jailor was a middle-class worker. Like Paul and all of us, these three had unique encounters with Christ.

Paul was competent but humble. Humility leads to grace, gratitude, peace, and prayer. It recognizes the gifts of others (partnerships). Humility touches our emotions (affections). Paul had a message to share about Jesus. Paul was on a mission to help others follow Jesus. Affection is a tender attachment that comes through experience. Often, that bond is developed during suffering and hardship. Paul was physically wounded when he was in Philippi. That trauma probably has something to do with why he developed such deep affection for them.

Paul also described the affection of Jesus. We constantly see His affection for others in the Gospels. He had compassion for the crowds who were lost and without a shepherd. He cared deeply about children, women, the sick, outcasts, and the rejects of His society. Our two favorite parables (The Good Samaritan and The Prodigal Son) each connected the word "compassion" to the "good guys" in the stories. When we know that people really care about us, we give them the benefit of the doubt. When we think they are just using us for their own objectives, we do not trust them and will not align with them. A heart of affection is a game changer. As John Wesley put it, *"If your heart is as my heart, lend me your hand."*

APPLICATION: Memorize verse 8: *For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.* **AFFECTION** will be the sermon topic. We see great affection in Jesus' ministry and with Paul and the Philippians. What does "affection" mean to you? How and to whom do you express your affection? What is hindering the development of your affections for the Lord and for others?

### CONTEXT:

- 1) The Antioch church prepared to send Paul and Barnabas on their **2<sup>nd</sup> MISSIONARY JOURNEY** to revisit the churches they had established on their 1<sup>st</sup> journey. Several things happened.
- 2) Paul refused to let **JOHN MARK** go because he had abandoned them earlier because he got homesick. Mark was Barnabas' cousin (and the author of the Gospel of Mark) and Barnabas

insisted Mark go. The missionary team split over this issue. Paul took Silas. Barnabas took Mark. Conflict is inevitable in life (ministry, too). Sometimes, there are reasons for a split. Paul eventually reconciled with Mark (2 Timothy 4:11).

3) **PAUL'S VISION** of a man saying, "*Come over to Macedonia*" (Greece) "*and help us.*" The gospel went west to Europe.

4) **ACTS 16** shows 3 diverse socio-economic groups of people: Lydia, the wealthy woman; a slave girl who is possessed by evil; the Philippian jailor.

5) He met the Philippian jailor after he cast the evil spirits out of her and her economic value was gone, a mob assaulted Paul and he was beaten by **RODS** (long sticks used for walking: Moses, Aaron, and David all them.) People could die from these beatings. 2 Cor 11:24-29 *Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. The time in Philippi is the only one of the three we know about. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.* He was **persecuted**.

### **Philippians 1:1-18a (#1164)**

2 thoughts from our text today:

1) **AFFECTION (LOVE).** *For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the AFFECTION of Christ Jesus. That your LOVE may abound more and more.* Jesus had tremendous affection for people. We are to model that, too. I was brought to faith in Christ by an attention-grabbing statement I'd never heard before: "*God loves you and I love you.*" John Wesley's converting moment was when he said, "*I felt my heart strangely warmed.*" That's warmth and affection, not distance and fear. When our hearts come alive in Christ, we don't HAVE to go to church, read the Bible, serve, pray, give or sing – we WANT to do so. Affection is the vehicle through which we grow to have a deeper love for Christ. The last conversation Jesus had with Peter – "Do you love me?" Jesus asked Peter 3x. Of all the churches, Paul had more affection for the Philippians than any other church. Paul said, "*Faith, hope and love abide, but the greatest of these is love.*" Andrew Forrest knows about affection for people...this is a hard day for him – saying goodbye to people he has served for 12 years.

2) **ADVERSITY CAN BUILD AFFECTION.** *I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* Every feature of Paul's life was shaped by his commitment to advance the gospel: his physical comfort (prison/beatings); the opinion of others; his position with the authorities; whether he lived or died. He wanted the Philippians to share this passion, too. What started down by the river in Philippi was strengthened by persecution. It is

continued. He had them in his heart. He was in chains in Philippi (not in Rome). He was stripped, beaten with rods, and thrown into the Philippian jail. Paul had been a persecutor of Christians. While on the road to Damascus, he was blinded by the light. The Lord told Ananias to go pray for Saul – but Ananias was terrified. *“Excuse me. You sure you got the right guy?”* **Acts 9:15-16** *“Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”* Paul writes to the Philippians while he is waiting for his trial (he was acquitted) in Rome. Even though it cost him 5 years of his ministry and life, he’s getting to preach in the King’s palace in Rome. Because of this, other believers were strengthened and made bold.

Psychology Today did a study for years asking people what was the worst thing that could happen: **Our #1 fear was being blind.** (More than dying.) Jim Stovall is blind. His accomplishments are amazing. He’s written over 50 books, produced movies, was an Olympic weightlifter. He says all the good things in his life started when he went blind when he was in college. He doesn’t think much about being blind because it is his normal. Blindness has opened the door for him to have a friendship with **Stevie Wonder**. They talk periodically. They ran into each other at an airport recently. Jim was sitting there writing a column based on Napoleon Hill's assertion that every adversity is endowed with the seed of a greater good. As he dictated this to Rebecca, his assistant, they heard their flight was delayed. That meant they wouldn’t make either his Dallas or the California flights. He thought he’d just skip writing the article because he didn’t see anything good in this flight delay. She said, *“Jim, Stevie Wonder and about 17 people wearing tour jackets just sat in an empty gate across there.”* Jim asked her to go over and tell his security guy Jim was there. She said, *“How do I know which one is the security guy?”* Jim said to walk toward Stevie, and she’d meet the security guy. Stevie and Jim were on the same flight that was delayed. Had his flight not been delayed, Jim would have missed the opportunity to deepen his friendship with Stevie Wonder. As they sat and talked, Rebecca said, *“Jim there's probably 400-500 people standing around looking at you two.”* Jim said it was fine with him. Stevie is used to it. That is his life. At one point Stevie said, *“You know, we're the luckiest people on the Earth.”* Jim agreed. However, most people would not say that to you when you are blind. His response to his adversity has led to incredible opportunities he would never have known otherwise.

One more Jim Stovall story (he gave me permission). He grew up attending 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Tulsa. His parents went every week. When Jim was 11-12, he was in a Sunday School class and the teacher read about Cain having a wife. Jim asked a logical question – *“If Adam and Eve were the first humans created and they had a son named ‘Cain,’ who was married – where did Cain get his wife?* The teacher said, *“We're not talking about that.”* Jim said, *“I don't want to talk about it; I just wondered where did Cain got the girl? There was just Mom and Dad. Where'd his wife come from?”* The teacher again said we are not getting into it. Jim said, *“I'm not asking you to get into it. I just wanted to know.”* Obviously, the teacher did not know (who does?). The teacher told Jim to leave the classroom and not come back anymore. Now Jim would have to explain to his parents why he’s no longer welcome in Sunday School. He went to the church library to wait. He said, *“The Saint of all Saints,”* Pastor Warren Hultgren, came into the library.

He asked Jim, *"What are you doing in here?"* Jim said, *"I got kicked out."* Jim told the story. Dr. Hultgren said there is nothing wrong with a young man wanting to know where Cain found his wife. He grabbed some books off the shelf to let Jim read them. Jim said that over the next six years, until he went to college, most Sundays the two of them met in the library. Dr. Hultgren would talk to this very bright teenager and say, *"Here's some things I'm thinking about - what do you think?"* In his sermon Dr. Hultgren sometimes said, *"I spoke with a learned colleague about this issue..."* The "learned colleague" was Jim when he was a teenager. Often, Dr. Hultgren was sequestered in his study before service, and I would tap on the door to see how he was doing. Ministry wore him down. He said serving Christ is good, but some Christians will wear you out. I wonder what would have happened to Jim Stovall if Dr. Hultgren hadn't loved that vulnerable boy and stayed with him through the years. He conferred tremendous esteem on Jim and helped keep him in the faith. Dr. Hultgren's investment has paid a huge dividend in return.



**From: Christina Lee Subject: thank you**

**Pastor Tom, Thank you for loving our family and leading our church all these years. We are beyond grateful for the impact Asbury has had in our lives and are so thankful to have raised our children here. We have journeyed with many of the same friends around 2 decades now and all watched and prayed for each other's children as we've watched them grow. The Senior Recognition Sunday was very special and meaningful to us. It is a neat and special thing to have the same pastor in your life for baptism, confirmation, and graduation but Landon has had just that. He has also enjoyed the senior bible study this year.**