

Series: Acts

Lesson #69

Title: Comfort of the Bound and Beaten

Scripture: Acts 16: 40

Date: May 14, 2009

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Princeton, New Jersey

Acts 16: 40: And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of Lydia*: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

Picture this in your minds eye, Lydia and the brethren, all of which were converted under Paul's preaching not many days before, are gathered at Lydia's house. Very likely joining them were the jailor and his household, who also were converted by the Lord very recently. Paul and Silas are bloody and bruised. Luke, the physician, is probably tending to their wounds.

All these young converts--babes in Christ--must have had many questions and fears as they saw the shameful manner in which Paul and Silas had been publicly stripped naked, beaten, thrown into prison, then released and begged to leave the city.

So the word says **when they had seen the brethren**, [Paul and Silas] **comforted them**. My subject is the Comfort of the Bound and Beaten.

Back in **Acts 14:22** we read what Paul did after he was beaten and left for dead, he went back to the brethren and, **Confirming the souls of the disciples** (he strengthened and consoled them by preaching Christ to them) **and exhorting them to continue in the faith** (he encouraged them to persevere trusting only in Christ Jesus the Lord and to hold forth the word of life) **and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God** (Paul instructed these brethren to expect tribulation from this world. But with the expectation of tribulation they should expect that Christ shall give more grace.)

Some time later, again when he was suffering captivity at the hands of the world, the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi. We know that the Apostle Paul's gospel--his word of comfort--did not change. So let's look into his epistle to the Philippians to see a few of the words with which Paul comforted them later. This will give us some idea of what he said to them here in Lydia's living room.

Philippians 1: 1: Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

As Paul and Silas gathered in Lydia's house in Philippi, we are told they were comforting the brethren. Here Paul calls them "saints." Do you know how a sinner comes to be a saint?

Jude 1: 1: Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and called*:

Philippians 1: 2: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

True enough, this is Paul's prayer for them. He prays for God's grace and God's peace upon them and in them. In verse 3 he thanks God for them--**I thank my God upon every remembrance of you**; in verse 4 he says it brings him great joy when he thinks of them and prays for them--**Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy**; in verse 5 Paul is thankful for their fellowship in the gospel--**5: For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.**

But something struck me about this when I heard, **Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.** In another place Paul said, **Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us** (2 Corinthians 5:20.) When John delivered the Revelation of Jesus Christ, though it was John delivering the revelation, he said in chapter 2 verse 7: **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**

So there you are, sitting in Lydia's house with your brethren, you are troubled, perhaps afraid, you don't know what to make of all that has happened to your beloved preacher and you wonder what will happen to *you* next. So here comes one of Christ's ambassadors with the gospel and as he speaks the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart, saying, **Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God the Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ. (v2)** This is truly what happens when the gospel is preached.

Meditate upon this brethren: is it too much to acknowledge that the substance of Paul's prayer gives us some glimpse of our Lord's intercession for his saints? Christ has made us one with God therefore we can be sure that as the Son of God our Savior joys over each of his saints, grace and peace are forever yours from God your Father for the sake of his precious Son our Lord Jesus Christ. What comfort and peace to know that the Lord Jesus Christ ever liveth to make intercession for you!

Now we come to the first word of comfort.

I. THE GOD OF FREE AND SOVEREIGN GRACE SHALL COMPLETE THE WORK HE HAS BEGUN IN YOU.

Philippians 1: 6: Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

A. The good work begun in you and I is regeneration, conversion, the forming of Christ in you. This work of regeneration is our first apprehension of the knowledge of God's everlasting love for us.

Beginning with the good work of regeneration God makes known to us when God the Father began this work which convinces us he shall continue it. He began this work **Ephesians 1:4: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5: Having predestinated us unto**

the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Did God carry forth in time what he began in eternity? **Ephesians 1: 7: In whom we have redemption through his blood, [we have] **the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.** Indeed, he continued the work he began in eternity in this time space continuum.**

Yet, we had no idea of this. Therefore what God started he carried on by making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself. (Eph 1: 8, 9.) By regeneration we have been made partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light. And because it pleased God that in Christ all fullness should dwell, when Christ is formed in us God makes known to us the riches of this glorious mystery called salvation and this is all our hope. **Col 1:27: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:**

Paul could say to those gathered in Lydia's house, and I say to you now, "Whether we be in bonds or free, whether we be defending the gospel before those who hate Christ or confirming the gospel to our brethren, remember, it is God who began this good work in you. He did it by the free and sovereign grace which you and I both are partakers of. Therefore he shall continue it by the same grace. That is what Paul said, **Philippians 1: 7: Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.**

B. Secondly, this work which God has begun in us individually is the way in which Christ brings us together collectively into his body and uses us to bear witness of him as he calls out others whom he has redeemed.

Therefore know for certain that God shall complete the work until the day of Christ. John 14:19:....the Lord said, **because I live, ye shall live also.**

And God will do this work in us through much tribulation to prove to us that he who has begun the work in us is the one who must and shall finish the work in us. As we grow in grace he gives us this assurance, **Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ** (Philippians 1: 6.)

Knowing this brethren...here is the second word of comfort.

II. GIVE YOURSELVES TO HEAR AND TO LEARN MORE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST THAT YOU MAY GROW THEREBY.

Philippians 1: 9: And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; 10: That ye may approve things that are excellent; that

ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

A. Believer's begin to love only when God gives us of his Spirit.

Only then do we begin to behold true love--the great love wherewith God loved us. **I John 4: 9: In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11: Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 12: No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13: Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.**

This word "perfected" means that when God gives us of his Spirit, the love he imparts in us is unfeigned, it is not hypocritical. Our love may appear cold at times; it may appear non-existent at times, but the love of the Spirit given in us is true. Could God give anything less than pure love when he gives us of his Spirit, when he who is pure takes up abode in us?

This love is manifest just like his love for us was manifested by God. He gave his only begotten Son, for those he loved. So too, his love *in us* makes us to give Christ to those whom we love, our brethren and to sinners, because we desire Christ to be exalted and his elect whom God has not yet called out of darkness to be brought to Christ.

B. By Christ filling us, this love grows in us more and more in knowledge and in judgment.

The love which the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in a sinner's heart is not sentimental or blind or a mere infatuation, it is in knowledge, in true understanding which God teaches. We know that God's love is particular, distinguishing, saving love; we know that God's love is in Christ Jesus his Son toward those God put in his Son; we know that God's love is in spite of the sinner's hatred for God, in spite of the sinner's desire not to be loved by the true and living God; we know therefore, that God's love saves absolutely.

C. As God grows us in his love for us, the believer grows in judgment. Our senses are exercised through trial by God as he proves to us that nothing shall separate us from his love.

This work of God, this work of Christ filling us, of God growing us in his love in knowledge, we are filled with fruits. Verse 10 says, we are grown **to approve things that are excellent--Hebrew 5:14: But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.** Verse 10 says it makes us to be sincere. More and more God makes our desire to be God's glory and honor over our own. Verse 10 says in this he grows in a desire to be **without offence till the day of Christ.** As God grows us he gives us a desire not to offend God. He makes us so that we will not compromise the truth of Christ, not in our worship, our walk or in our witnessing of him.

All of this fruit is grown in us in the midst of great tribulation to teach us that these fruits of righteousness are not of us, but are the fruits of righteousness which Christ fills his saints with. **Philippians 1: 11: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.**

God grows us in love in two ways: through the gospel and through experiencing trials.

Illustration: God began this work in the brethren at Philippi through the hearing of the gospel of Christ. Then God gave them a great trial as Paul and Silas are beaten. Now God is growing them through the gospel as Paul and Silas come into Lydia's house with this gospel.

We come here and I preach the gospel of Christ to you: **Romans 8: 35: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36: As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.** You hear it just as Lydia and the jailor heard it. They believed the Lord's word. But then they had their senses exercised through this trial. Then Paul comes and preaches this word of assurance to them and they can say, **37: Nay, in all these things we ARE more than conquerors through HIM that loved us.**

So after you hear this gospel you go out into the world and we experience trial but God gathers us back together and we hear the gospel preached again. In doing so God grows in assurance so that we know that tribulation really does work patience; And patience really does grow us in maturity; and as we mature our hope really does become more and more to be only Christ. And we learn it because as we hear it preached, as we experience it in trial, as we hear it preached, as we experience it in trial--**hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us** (Romans 5: 3-5.)

I. Our comfort is knowing that God has begun the work, God will finish it.

II. Therefore we give ourselves to know more of Christ that we may grow in love thereby.

Here is the third word of comfort:

III. HOLD FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE.

A. As our love abounds in knowledge and sense our desire will be for others to hear the gospel of Christ.

Philippian 1: 12: But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

Paul shows his love in his desire for the preaching of the gospel and in his desire for his brethren to know that his mistreatment resulted in the furtherance of the gospel.

Illustration: That is exactly what happened back when Paul was imprisoned by the magistrates at Philippi. Christ gave the magistrates over to put Paul and Silas exactly where Christ would have his gospel to go. Paul could say that everything that happened to he and

Silas fell out unto the furtherance of the gospel. The Philippian jailor was saved. Therefore when the mission was accomplished, the Lord turned the hearts of the men so that they sent word saying, "Let those men go." Because now, Christ had work for Paul and Silas in comforting the brethren so that they would know all this happened according to Christ's purpose of grace in saving his elect. **Psalm 76:10: Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.**

Christ is truly reigning. All power in heaven and earth truly is his. He truly is bringing the gospel in truth to each one of his elect because he is able. **Isaiah 46: 9 Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, 10: Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it. 12: Harken unto me, ye stouthearted, that *are* far from righteousness: 13: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.**

B. As God grows us in this love, we become more assured that God shall bless the work he has begun no matter what opposition we face.

Philippians 1: 19: For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20: According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, OR by death. 21: For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

This grace, this growth, this maturing in love in knowledge and judgment makes Christ the believer's life. If I have life it is because **Christ liveth in me.** And if Christ liveth in me...**the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Ga 2: 20.)** If I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God living in me then by his Spirit in me if the Lord allows me to live tomorrow it will be to worship Christ, to learn of him, to prepare to further the gospel of Christ Jesus my Lord. In other words, he makes us to lay aside our selfish, sinful ambitions in order that we might pursue his work. And if I die-it will mean life with Christ for all eternity.

If I am sitting there in Lydia's house and hear Paul say something like this, it gives great meaning and great purpose to why Christ gave me spiritual life and why he has left me on this earth. How about you?

Application: A. Within the church

Philippians 1: 27: Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Give yourselves to learn of Christ and to worship Christ

- You all born of the same Spirit
- You all speak the language of free grace
- You all wear the garments of Christ's righteousness
- You all eat the same spiritual meat--the Bread of Life
- You all live by Christ living in you

Therefore we all work together for the faith of the gospel, to bear witness of Christ.

Philippians 2: 14: Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16: Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

B. Concerning those who oppose

Philippians 1: 28: And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

Illustration: When the owners of that slave girl charged Paul and Silas falsely, when the magistrates ordered them to be beaten and cast them into prison, when they told Paul and Silas they were free to go and yet Paul and Silas refused until the magistrates walked out with them, those adversaries saw in Paul and Silas everything they were not. Those enemies could have never stood for anybody, not even themselves, much less for Christ. And it was an evident token that they themselves knew nothing of the grace of God. When your adversary throws every fiery dart they can at you and you stand for Christ it makes them to know you have something that they know nothing of.

At the same time, that steadfastness was to Paul and Silas an evident token that they were saved--**and that of God.** Paul knew it was of God because they knew that they had no strength in themselves just like the magistrates had none in their flesh. It was only by God's grace that they stood firm. But what did Paul say here: **he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.** Be sure you catch this next verse.

Philippians 1: 29: For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

Your faith is the gift of God to you in the behalf of Christ. And likewise the gift of steadfastness in the midst of suffering is given by God in behalf of Christ. That is why steadfastness in the face of opposition is to you an evident token of salvation. Just as the gift of faith was given unto us by God's grace which enabled us to believe on Christ so too the gift of constancy shall be given unto us by God's grace which shall enable us to suffer, and both in the behalf of Christ.

What kind of suffering?

Philippians 1: 30: Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be in me.*

Believers shall be upheld in the same kind of conflict which Lydia and the brethren beheld when they saw Paul stripped and beaten by the magistrates at Philippi. And believers shall be upheld during the same kind of conflict they heard about as Paul was imprisoned at Rome.

Paul says God who began this work in you, who is growing you in love in knowledge through the gospel and in judgment through trial, the God who by this is causing you to desire to know more of Christ, who is giving you a heart to further this gospel, shall continue this work. God will do this so that you may declare that from the first hour he gave you faith until the day when they tied you to a stake, poured gasoline on you and struck the match, your message that Christ is All never wavered because of his grace from start to finish.

This world's message speaks of growth as somehow making the believer more and more able to stand as he grows more and more strong by his works of obedience. The gospel declares that through trial which we can not bear ourselves, God makes us less and less independent and more and more dependant upon him. This is true steadfastness.

TRULY GROWTH IN GRACE, IN FAITH, IN HOPE AND IN LOVE, IS GROWING TO DEPEND LESS UPON ANYTHING WE HAVE DONE AND MORE UPON THE GOD OF ALL GRACE! AMEN.