

The Prison Epistles 01 Philippians-Intro.

by David Clifford

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being in the will of God, and the benefits and blessings that come from following God's plan and purpose for our lives.

Duration: 48:07

Topics: "Trusting God", "Faithfulness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of trusting in Christ and doing His will. He refers to the story of the children of Israel in Exodus, where God clearly instructed them to go into the wilderness and worship Him. Despite being in God's will, they faced a challenge of not finding water to drink. However, they cried out to Moses, who in turn cried out to the Lord, and God provided for their needs. The preacher also shares a personal story of a man who found the will of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, leading to miraculous provisions and opportunities for ministry. The sermon encourages listeners to trust in God's faithfulness in both times of need and abundance.

Transcript

Now may we read together from Paul's letter to the Philippians, and the first chapter, and we will commence reading at verse twelve. Philippians one, twelve. After some thought and prayer I have decided not to give a series on fellowship as I had previously thought, but on some of the main themes of the present epistles, which I trust you will not only find interesting, but very helpful.

May the Lord bless our study together. And tonight I will just give an introduction, a general introduction to the idea. Now Philippians chapter one, and verse twelve.

But I would you should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places. And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, some also of goodwill. The one preached Christ of contention, not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my bonds. The other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

What then? Notwithstanding in every way whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached. And I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

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. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. May the Lord bless to us the reading from his precious word.

I have to adjust my spectacle so that I can see you all. And as you know, I like to look at you, every one of you, and see how you're getting on during the course of the message, see whether it's registering in your mind, and whether I am getting the intellectual response. It means to say you mustn't go to sleep, amongst other things.

You know, some preachers look at the ceiling, I haven't got into that habit yet. Others look through the window while they're preaching. One brother was preaching away, looking at the ceiling all the time, and after about thirty-five minutes, when he looked down, everybody had gone, except the man on the platform with him.

So he turned to him and said, where's everybody gone? He said, they've all gone. He said, why haven't you gone? He said, I'm the next preacher. So I'm going to keep my eye on you tonight.

You've been doing very well with the beautiful American food today, they tell me, and so have I. So we'll try to encourage one another to keep alert, and receive all that the Lord has for us through this introductory message this evening. Now these letters, the prison epistles as they are called, four in number, have come down to us, been preserved for us by God, and they are here in the Scriptures of Truth, and they're given to us as the Word of God. And we shall mention a little bit more about that idea as we go along, I expect.

The Apostle Paul wrote these letters while he was in prison in Rome. And it was a very good thing, for more reasons than one, that the Apostle Paul went to prison in Rome. Now whenever you are in the will of God, there's always a lot of blessing as a result of it.

And he went to prison in Rome in the will of God. There was a lot of blessing through it. Now even if you have to suffer if you're in the will of God, it will be all right in the end.

For God's will is perfect, and God's will always ends well. There was a certain man in the south of England, only a very few years ago, who was a racehorse owner and a director in a brewery firm, and some other firms as well. He had some very good stables near his home.

And one day he was taking a walk in a country lane, just a mile or two from his home. And he was not a religious man, and never went to church or had never been to Sunday school. But as he was walking along he suddenly heard very plainly this, He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

He looked around, couldn't see anybody, went on walking, thought he was dreaming. Then again after another hundred or two yards he heard it very plainly, He that doeth the will of God abideth forever. He looked around, still no one around.

So he thought, now this is strange, I'm not a religious man. And the text was so clear in his ear, and in his heart too, he returned home immediately. It took him quite a while to find the Bible, and it took him a long

time to find that text, but he found it.

In John's epistle, He that doeth the will of God abideth forever. But not only did he find the text, he found the Christ. And in finding the Lord Jesus Christ as his own personal saviour, he found himself in the centre of the will of God.

For the Lord Jesus said, I am the way, no man cometh unto the Father but by me. So he sold his horses, and he gave up his share in the brewery farm, and he led his wife to Christ, a society woman, and they bought a caravan as we call them, a trailer, hitched on the back of his car, and they went around the south of England preaching in the villages and giving their testimony of faith in Christ. And how glad they were to be now in the will of God, in Christ, trusting him and seeking to serve him.

Tremendous blessing is in the will of God, even although it may mean prison in Rome, or wherever you wish to think of. As a matter of fact, Madame Guyon was in prison in France for Christ's sake, for her testimony as a Christian. And she was rejoicing, not in the dirty dungeon where she was, but in the will of God in which she was resting amidst her trial.

And she put it this way, within this place of certain good, love evermore expands her wings, and nestling neath thy perfect choice abides content with what it brings. No silken couch or softest bed could ever give me such sweet rest. Thy wonderful grand will, my God, with triumph now I make it mine, and faith shall cry a joyous yes to every dear command of thine.

And God's commands are not greedless, his will is not hard, that means. I know some preachers will say that to be a Christian is the most difficult thing on earth, it has many great trials and tribulations and worries and testings, the hardest life of all. And yet the Lord Jesus said exactly the opposite.

And I believe what the Lord Jesus says, and not what some of our preachers say. The Lord Jesus said my oath is easy, my burden is light, and you shall find rest for your souls. Easy, light, rest.

Three wonderful words from the heart of the Saviour to your heart and mine. Not that we shall escape testing as we trust Christ and do his will, but even in the testing, while the storm is on, we shall rest in him, our never failing pilot, and find that his strength is made perfect in our weakness, and his presence real in the time of testing. Now the Lord made his plan very clear and plain for the children of Israel in chapter 3 of Exodus.

He says my will for you is that you should go into the wilderness three days journey and there worship the Lord your God. And in chapter 15 of Exodus they are there in God's will. In the line of Israel, exactly where he said they should come to, they were in the wilderness of Sheol three days journey.

And they found, what would you think they would find in the will of God? Every blessing. And it says, and they found no water to drink. And they cried to Moses, and Moses cried to the Lord.

And they were there in the line of God's will and immediately there was a testing time for them. And they came unto Marah, and the waters at Marah were bitter and they couldn't drink of the waters of Marah. For Marah means bitterness.

You see God knew what he was doing, leading them in his will like this, to this place. They had forty long years before them. They didn't know, he knew.

Forty years before them in the wilderness with no one to provide victuals for the way for them save the Lord God himself. So right at the beginning of the journey he brought them to the place where there was nothing so that they might prove his power to provide and learn more of their Almighty God. Similarly the Lord Jesus said to his disciples, once I want you to go across the sea to Bethsaida in Galilee.

This is in Mark chapter six. He says, my will for you is Bethsaida in Galilee. And they launched forth and they were bending to the oars and they tried to do his will.

And as a matter of fact they got into a storm and he knew there was going to be a storm. He was the omniscient son of God. He knew everything and he sent them into the storm.

He does that, you know, in his perfect will sometimes. Why? He condemns us to save us. He defeats us to deliver us.

He binds us to set us free. His ways are above our ways. His thoughts above our thoughts.

He does his ways for us the divine way. So he sent them into the sea, into the storm so that they might learn they needed him in every circumstance and vicissitude of their earthly life. Now I hope that we shall come to the definite conclusion tonight that to do the will of God is best for us.

To be in the centre of the will of God is the proper thing for us. We were made to glorify him, to walk in the line of his perfect will. And as I said this morning, if I can repeat myself, the blessings of God run deep in the channel of his will.

Because you see the children of Israel, they not only came to Mara where the waters were bitter, but the next stage brought them into blessedness. They came to Elim, 12 wells of water, 70 palm trees. They encamped by the waters, beneath the shade of the trees, perfect shade, perfect rest, perfect supply, perfect satisfaction.

Why was everything perfect? Because they were in the perfect will of God. It doesn't mean to say if you are determined to do his will exclusively that you will escape testing. But it does mean that in the testing he will be real to you and make himself known to you as the Lord Jesus did to the disciples on the sea during the storm.

And he will see you through to your desired haven and bless you abundantly. For that is the place of the blessing. And the Apostle Paul found himself in prison in Rome and for him it was God's place.

It was the place of blessing. As a matter of fact, God told him to go there and he said, Amen Lord, yes, right, I will, by your grace, with your help I'll do what you say, I'll go to Rome. And so you can expect, if he's in Rome, even in prison, in the will of God, you could expect some blessing.

We just want, by way of introduction, speak of some of these blessings this evening. Thy wonderful grand will, my God, said Madame Guillaume, and we say, sweet will of God, be thou my portion, self-lost in thee, my heart shall rejoice, if in the valley or on the mountain, sweet will of God, my choice. And God said to Paul, my will for you is Rome.

Next. Now the circumstances in which God said that were very interesting. This was one of Paul's visions in the night when the Lord revealed himself and his comfort and his will to his servant at a time he needed it.

And you know, this was the rule of Paul's life. I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. The first vision that Paul had was on the way to Damascus as Saul of Tarsus, the arrogant, unregenerate, idealist Saul of Tarsus, when the Lord Jesus met him, the risen Christ met him.

And this was the beginning of all the blessing, in and through his life, he had a personal experience of the risen Christ. Now every life of blessing will start just here. I want to appeal to you tonight to make quite sure that you've met the risen Christ.

It's not enough to give a mental ascent to the teachings of Jesus. You must meet the risen Christ. It's not enough to try to follow the example of the Lord Jesus.

You must have a personal experience of acquaintance with the living, the risen Christ, who died for you to take away your sins, who died for you on the cross of Calvary. You must get to know Him, whom to know is life eternal. For the moment you come face to face with Christ, the risen Christ who died for you, own Him as your Lord and your own personal Saviour, then the Holy Spirit will do a wonderful thing in your life.

He will make you anew. If any man is in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things have passed away, and behold, all things are become new.

And Saul of Tarsus said, who is it, Lord? He said, I am Jesus. The words came so sweetly amidst the light, the dazzling light from the glory of heaven. I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

It is hard for thee to kick against the Lord. Who is it, Lord? I am Jesus. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? He owned Jesus as Lord, and immediately he submitted to his will.

He said, henceforth, Lord, it is your will for my life entirely. And God took him at his word and said, well, now you go into the city and it's going to be told you what you must do. And always from thereafter, so I understand, Paul was able to say, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

I know our dear departed brother, Dr. de Haan, makes quite a lot about the mistake the Apostle Paul made in going to Jerusalem, and I know it's a very debatable point, and I don't think we will debate it tonight. Perhaps we can occupy our time in a better way. But it's very interesting, and it has some very, very good arguments.

But even if the Apostle Paul did make a mistake in going to Jerusalem, when so many tried to stop him from going there, when he was in Jerusalem, he was determined that no mistake would be made in his life from then onwards if he did make a mistake before, which is doubtful, because he was determined, whatever the cost, to go to Rome and do the will of God and preach the word in Rome. And so, on this particular occasion, he was a prisoner in Jerusalem, and he'd had a very bad time. This was the second day of his imprisonment, and he was making his defence before the people.

And, as by a stroke of genius, I suppose, or whatever it was, I don't know what he would call it, he spoke publicly about the resurrection of the dead. Now, this split his audience in two, because the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection, and the Pharisees did, and they were against one another, but together they were against Paul. And they almost split him in two.

They almost lynched him. Some pulled one way, and some pulled the other. And it was a mercy that the soldiers came out of the castle, and they pulled him into the castle, and just rescued him in time, and saved his life.

And after a dreadful experience like that, well, you would expect the servant of the Lord, who was testifying to the Lord and his word and truth, to get some comfort from the Lord. And he did that night. The Lord appeared unto him and said, Fear not, Paul.

And that was enough for his comfort. But he went on to give him some counsel, and he said, Fear not, Paul. As thou hast testified for me here in Jerusalem, so thou must testify in Rome.

Now, you may think there was no point in God giving him counsel and guidance, telling him what to do, because he was a prisoner now, and had to go where others took him, or sent him, and do what others told him to do. But no, God in his wisdom gave him counsel and said, Rome next, Paul. And here he was in Jerusalem, quite a long way away.

So Paul made a mental note of it. And before very long, do you know what he did? He had the audacity, if that's the right word, I'm quite sure it isn't, to ask his captors, his judges, for a free ticket to Rome. Do you want a ticket to Rome, please? Did you ever read that in the scriptures? It's there as plain as a pie star.

I know you've never read it, because it's not in that terminology. But he says, Will you please give me a free ticket to Rome? Because God told me to go to Rome next. This is how he put it.

He was speaking before his judges, and giving his testimony, and so on. And then towards the end, he said, Now I appeal unto Caesar. And Caesar was in Rome.

And they said, To Caesar thou shalt go. Now this was the only way in the wide, wide world, open to him, to get to Rome, to appeal to Caesar. And they two put their heads together and said, Isn't this man Paul a fool? If he hadn't wanted to appeal to Caesar, we should have given him his liberty.

But he didn't want liberty. God said to Rome, so he said, Rome, please, give me a ticket to Rome, please. And they, after a little while, put him on a ship to go to Rome.

He was determined to do the will of God. As thou hast testified in Jerusalem, so thou must also testify in Rome. So after a little while at Caesarea, in a prison there, he got in a boat, he got on a boat, or in a boat, or on a boat, probably in a boat, and he went across the sea.

And while he was going across the sea toward Rome, lo and behold, that terrific storm, I think it's the same one as we had yesterday here, came, or it was a bit worse. That was called Euroclidon. And it was a terrible storm.

And you know, eventually, after several days, they all gave up hope of being saved. It says, All hope that we should be saved was then taken away. Everybody expected the boat to go down.

And when they got to that point, Paul started thinking. Now, he said, Didn't God tell me to testify in Rome next? Yes. And didn't I ask for a ticket to Rome? Yes.

And I'm in his will on the way to Rome? Must be. And yet everybody tells me the boat is going down. Now, I don't know what's wrong, but there's something wrong somewhere.

So, he said, I'll go and have a quiet time about it, like you do when you're puzzled about things. When you wonder that you're in the will of God or not. He went down below and had a quiet time.

I expect he was already chained down below anyway. But he had a time with the Lord. Marvellous, you can have a time with the Lord even if you're chained, or let loose, or wherever you are, on the sea, or the land, in the storm, or down by the side of the lake.

You can always have a time with the Lord. And the Lord appeared to him. And the Lord said to him again, Fear not, Paul.

You'll get to Rome, all right. The boat is going down, but you won't go down, neither will anybody else on board. But the boat will be lost.

So, he got upstairs, he came up to see the man. He said, Sirs, be of good cheer. Be of good cheer.

And they all knew the boat was going down. They would pick up the anchor or something and throw it at him. Be of good cheer.

He said, Be of good cheer, for I believe, God, that it shall be as it was told me, as it was told me in Jerusalem. It shall be. I shall get to Rome.

God told me to go to Rome. It shall be as it was told me. Wherefore, sirs, get something to eat, take a meal and enjoy yourselves.

And so it was, the boat went down. But some of the men on board, some on broken pieces of the ship and some swimming, they all got to Malta safely and none were lost according to the word of the Lord. And according to the will of the Lord, Paul, before long, got to Italy and went towards Rome, escorted as a prisoner in the will of God.

The brethren at Rome heard that he was coming and so they sent out a double deputation to meet the famous apostle to the Gentiles, the once arrogant Saul of Tarsus. The older brethren couldn't walk very far, you know, the type like me. And they met him at the Appii Forum.

But the younger brethren who could walk further, they met him at the three taverns. I don't think they went inside, they just waited there for him to come. And this double deputation of brethren from Rome brought him into the city with rejoicing.

Now he had his own hired room. I think the word there is room rather than house. I mean to say it suggested he had a room.

He wouldn't have a house of his own as a prisoner. And he had his own hired room and he was able to see his Christian friends and the brethren from Rome from time to time. And it was from this prison in Rome that the apostle Paul rejoiced in the fact that he knew he was in the will of God.

We were reading this tonight. Brethren, I want you to understand that the things that have happened unto me, this imprisonment in Rome, have turned out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. There's always a lot of blessing if we are found in the will of the Lord.

Now for one thing the apostle Paul proved God's faithfulness himself in a new way while he was in prison in Rome. You see it was all right for him going around with Aristarchus and others, with the gospel team, preaching the word from city to city, getting converts, receiving their hospitality, and receiving expenses from time to time, other times working hard himself to provide for the needs of needed brethren that he was working with. And very often of course he ministered to them in spiritual things, they ministered to him

in temporal, not carnal please, but in temporal things.

And that was all right. I suppose it's fairly easy in some of our countries today to do that sort of thing still and live by faith and serve the Lord. But when the war comes and all your meetings finish, then you can prove the Lord in a new way.

And when you get locked up in prison like Paul was, then you can prove the Lord in a new way. And these experiences are essential for God's servants. But you see while he was there in prison, the Christians at Philippi, who had been very, very faithful in having fellowship with him in a practical way through the years, ever since he'd led them to Christ, when he first went to Philippi and answered to the Macedonian call, by the way that was another vision of his, and he was able to say again then when he got to that city in Lydia's home, O Lord by thy grace I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

These Christians at Philippi now heard that he was in prison in Rome, and they took up a special love offering, as you call it in America, for the beloved brother in Rome, and sent it to him by the hand of a noble young fellow called Epaphroditus. Now we'll talk more about this later on in the week, if ever we get that far, I'm sure we shall if we struggle on, how Epaphroditus came with this gift, and we'll talk about this more when we are talking about the letter to the Philippian Christians when he thanks them for this love gift, this love offering. So the Apostle Paul was thanking the Lord for that blessing, I'm sure, that he proved that God was faithful.

You read more about that in the fourth chapter of the letter to the Philippians. I can do all things, he says, through Christ that strengthens me. I am master of every situation through Christ who makes me strong, is one translation.

And he said, I know how to abound, and I know how to suffer need. I am master of every situation. One situation was abounding, and he knew how to control that situation by the grace of Christ.

And another situation was to be in need, and to be literally in need, and he knew how to cope with that situation too. One of my graduates, would you believe it, in one of the counties in England, which is called the Evangelist graveyard, a few years ago I met him starving to death. He was serving the Lord, having meetings, if you please, in the assembly, preaching around the whole county, and for 300 meetings he'd taken in the first 18 months, no one in any of those meetings ministered to him with regard to giving and receiving.

He never had a penny towards his petrol, or gas as you'd call it, and nothing for his expenses. 300 times he'd preached the word in that county in England, in 18 months, and never had a penny. And he'd had nothing to eat for 10 days, and he was living in one of these trailers in the very grounds of one of our gospel halls.

So you can have an experience like that, even in these days in which we live. And the Apostle says, I know all about those experiences, I am master of every situation, I know what to do when I'm in need, I cast myself upon God and rest in his faithfulness. And I know what to do when I am abounding, and the Lord has sent me more than I need, or I'm able to work at my tent, and I go and sell the stuff in the marketplace, I not only teach the gospel while I'm there, but I go back to the assembly and give the money to some needy saints.

And that's what he did in some of the cities as well. Well, we're not talking about Philippians 4 now, I'm going on ahead, aren't I? We've got to talk about that when we get to this particular epistle, and take a panoramic view of that. But Paul, in the will of God, in prison, in Rome, proved God's faithfulness in a new way.

Also, he found that a door was open for him to preach the gospel as he wanted it to be opened, but in a different way from his personal request. You see, when he was writing to the Colossians earlier on, 12 months before, in chapter 4, he was suggesting that they prayed for him, that he might get his release from prison, so that he could preach the gospel as he wanted to preach it. He asked them that a door may be opened for him to preach.

He meant the prison door, I'm quite sure. But, you know, 12 months later, writing to the Philippians, he says, God has opened the door for me to preach the gospel without the prison door opening. God's answered my prayer in a way I hadn't thought of at the time when I was writing to the Colossian Christians.

He says, here in Caesar's court, in the palace, there are his courtiers, his guards, are hearing the word and getting converted. And he sends greetings to the Christians to whom he is writing, from these new converts who are soldiers, or guards, or courtiers, or even slaves. Onesimus was one of them.

We'll be talking about him on one of these occasions when we talk about his letter to Philemon. And so, a door was opened for him to preach the gospel without the prison door opening. And so, the soldier to whom he was chained, and the people who came in, and the slaves who worked nearby, all heard the preaching of the gospel and the exaltation of Christ from his lips as he was there in prison in his own hired room.

You know, Paul had a great passion to evangelize. He was a tremendous teacher, but never lost the burden and desire to win men and women for Christ. You very often find young evangelists develop into teachers and then lose the evangelistic zeal, which I think is a great pity indeed.

Right at the very end, when Paul knew that before long he was going to lose his life, he wrote to Timothy and he says, Timothy, whatever you do, you might be an elder in the church, but do the work of an evangelist. Well, he enjoyed, thirdly, he enjoyed the fellowship of saints and proved its value in difficult circumstances. That must have been a tremendous blessing to him and a boost to his joy.

In the twenty-third verse of Philemon, we find that Epaphras is called his fellow prisoner. Now, Epaphras came a long way to be with the apostle Paul and he stayed with him of his own volition in that hired room for a while, sharing imprisonment with the apostle Paul. And others, I believe, like Aristarchus, did the same.

Now, Aristarchus is called Paul's companion in travel. You read of him in Colossians 4 in that respect. He used to have a very pleasant job carrying Paul's case or bag, weekend bag or whatever you call it in this country, I don't know, from place to place and having fellowship with a great and wonderful beloved brother, Apostle Paul.

Oh, that was a marvellous experience. He was rejoicing with those that were rejoicing, but now Paul was locked up in prison. Aristarchus was there with him, fulfilling the word of Christ and the law of Christ, bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.

So, he was a very balanced brother, I'm sure, was Aristarchus. And how the apostle Paul enjoyed his fellowship and how he enjoyed the fellowship of Luke who was with him at one time and apparently stayed longer than others because writing in 2 Timothy he said, only Luke is with me. This was in all probability in Paul's second imprisonment.

So, the beloved doctor was with him. Kitchicus was there, of course he was the amanuensis. At Paul's dictation these prison letters were taken down by Kitchicus.

But he was not only the shorthand typist, I was going to say, but he was the postman, as we say, the mailman. I always have to think what the term is in American language. He was the mailman and he took the letter that he had already taken down for Paulino, took it along to the Christians at Colossae and travelled there with Onesimus who also had a letter for somebody in Colossae.

Now, another point was this, another blessing of his imprisonment was this. There were some bashful brethren who now began a belated ministry now that Paul was locked up in prison. You see, some of the brethren having themselves gifts from God to exercise in the local assembly or in gospel ministry in one way or another were not exercising or developing the gifts that God had given to them.

You know, these gifts of Christ, we call them the gifts of the Spirit, but they are really gifts of Christ. He ascended on high and he gave gifts unto men, but they are wrought by the Spirit, that's why they call them gifts of the Spirit. They are very, very important things and some of us get old before we understand the fact that we've been given a ministry, a gift by God to exercise for his glory in and from the local assembly.

Now, these bashful brethren were now beginning a belated ministry and exercising their gifts because the Apostle Paul was locked up in prison. Think of that. They wouldn't do a thing before, but now they were getting a move on.

God has to do that sometimes, you know, to get some brethren or sisters moving in his holy service. He has to take somebody away to another district, to another state, or to prison, or to heaven before some brethren will get moving at all. I think that's rather a pity because it means to say if that is the case, we have failed to understand that God would have us find out what gift he has given to us in Christ and how we should develop that gift now and take the liberty the Holy Spirit affords us in the assembly to exercise our gift and to glorify his name.

Of course, to do this we shall need to fence off certain hours each day for the study of God's word that we might see the flock of God. Over which, in some cases, the Holy Ghost has made us oversee us. But the thing that we are trying to get at this evening, I know we've been a long time getting there, but I trust the route hasn't been too painful but a little bit interesting to you, is this.

The fifth blessing through Paul's imprisonment in the will of God in Rome was that while he was there he wrote some letters. At least four, probably five or six letters. And four of them have come down to us, have been preserved and here they are in the Holy Scriptures.

He wrote them quite evidently under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Just as the wind gets into the sails of a little ship and carries it across the lake, so the Holy Spirit got into the Apostle Paul and controlled him as he wrote. And here we find the dual authorship of Scripture plainly marked.

In his writings you see the personality of the Apostle but you see the power of God. In his writings you see his own burden. Brethren, my prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.

I wish myself accursed for their faith and so on. And the Apostle Paul's burdens and heart desires and passions and prayers are all there and yet we call it the Word of God. Indeed the Apostle Paul wrote these letters but he wrote them under the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit controlling him.

Now this of course is what the fullness of the Holy Spirit is. Not me having more of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a person you can't divide him up and have a bit and then a lot more and then a lot more still and then overflow with an abundance of him.

He is a person you cannot divide him up like that but he can have more of you. Every believer possesses the Holy Spirit. If any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.

And when he possesses you completely, when every avenue of the soul is controlled by the one who is already in the life, then that is the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And the Apostle Paul was undoubtedly filled with the Holy Ghost. All the way through the Acts of the Apostles.

You can make the study yourself. You will find that when they were filled with the Holy Ghost they were filled with the other blessing they needed at the time. The Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit of Jesus.

He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. And when they were filled with him, look it up yourself, they were filled with the other blessing they needed at the time. They were threatening, they were being threatened.

They said, Lord grant with all boldness thy servants might speak thy word. They were filled with the Holy Ghost and with boldness. And that man Stephen, he was filled with the Holy Ghost and dying grace.

And earlier on there were others who were filled with the Holy Ghost and with power. Filled with the Holy Ghost and authority. And they were persecuted and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and joy.

Whatever blessing you need in any circumstance or vicissitude of life, if you are filled with the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son, you have got the blessing that you need. Because it is all in him. That is why the Holy Spirit has been given to you.

To control you and bring to you the blessing you need at the time. Now you need a blessing tonight. I don't know what it is, but maybe you don't know what it is.

But God knows what you need. Maybe you need salvation. Well then if you receive Christ as your Saviour, his Spirit will indwell your heart.

You will be saved by sovereign grace. How about that? Maybe you need victory. Well, the Holy Spirit will make the victory of Christ of two thousand years ago real in your present experience when he is in control of the life.

And so we could go on. But I must not give you a sermon on that tonight. But the Apostle Paul was undoubtedly filled with the Holy Spirit, controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has sought to preserve his letters for us so that we can have them today. And so that this week we can look at them and study them together. We're not going to study them particularly microscopically, although some little bits we might.

But we're going to study them telescopically. And both ideas are needed in our studies of the Scriptures. And we're going to have a general panoramic view of the main truths, the main themes of the prison letters.

So that we might grow thereby. So that the Lord Jesus shall become more precious to us. And that we might understand more of his will.

Well, you see, when he wrote to the Ephesian Christians, and this probably was a circular letter, not only to them. The subject was Christ and the Church. And the Church's union with Christ.

And when he wrote to the Philippians, which was a love letter and an acknowledgement for the gift I was speaking about. The subject is Christ and the Christian himself. And when he wrote to the Colossian Christians, where there was a problem arising in the Church.

His subject was Christ and his fullness or his preeminent. And when he wrote to that individual Philemon, the nobleman of Colossae. The subject was Christ and his grace.

You know, Epaphras came about 950 miles by road and on foot to Paul in prison at Rome. To tell him about the problem arising in the Church, the assembly at Colossae. And Paul was very burdened and prayed for him straight away.

Although he'd never been to that city and only knew one or two of them there. He wrote to them very soon. And then, of course, Epaphroditus came about 600 miles by foot.

He was taken ill on the way. No wonder, if I had to walk 600 miles, I'd be ill longer before halfway. Halfway along he was taken very ill and he pulled himself together, struggled to the end.

And handed over the gift to the Apostle Paul in prison at Rome. And then, of course, he had to go all the way back again. But he stayed in Rome for a little while to recover.

And then, of course, Onesimus was going about 950 miles from Rome. This slave now converted with a letter for his old boss. Because Paul wanted Philemon to receive this man back again.

Not as a slave now, but as a brother beloved. We're going to talk about all these most interesting things together during the week. And may the Holy Spirit lead us and control us and fill us as we speak and as we listen about His wonderful Word.

And as Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit, may we be inspired by God's Holy Spirit as well. So that when you write a letter, you being under His control, say something which will be a blessing to people as they read it. And when you telephone, that you telephone under the inspiration and control of God's Holy Spirit.

So there's blessing on the other side. So that when you pray, your prayers are prevailing, being inspired and enabled by the Holy Spirit of God. And even if you have to go to prison, well, may the Lord bless you there and make it to be a blessing as He did the Apostle Paul.

You know, it's a great blessing to us that Paul went to prison in the will of God in Rome. And I think at the end of the week, you'll say amen to that as well. Oh Lord, we praise Thee tonight for Thy wonderful Word, Thy living Word, Thy life-giving Word, Thy life-sustaining Word.

Make the book live to us, show us ourselves within Thy Word, show us ourselves and show us our Saviour and make the book live to us. And we pray that every one of us may be quite sure tonight that the Lord Jesus is our Saviour by repenting of our sins and receiving and trusting Him as our very own. And may every one of us by the enabling of the Spirit go forth to do the will of Christ in our lives so that they might be blessing in and from our lives to the glory of our Redeemer.

So may the grace of Christ, the all-sufficient grace of Christ be with us all.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/9/SID9964.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/david-clifford/the-prison-epistles-01-philippians-intro/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net