



OHBC MEMORY VERSE – WEEK #50

THIS WEEK'S VERSE: PHILIPPIANS 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;”

Why Philippians 1:12?

Because it is such a radical perspective concerning the trials and difficulties of life!

As we will see in this week's discussion of the Book of Philippians in our 365 Days of Pursuit, when Paul writes this letter to the Philippians, he has been locked up in a Roman prison for quite a while — almost five years, in fact! And what made the circumstances of his being there even worse, was the fact that he wasn't there because of something he had done wrong. If that would have been the case, at least he would have been able to look at his situation and know that he was there because justice had been served, and that it was simply the due consequence for his actions. But rather, he is actually there because of gossip amongst people who professed to be Christians, who were spreading a false report about something they had been told that Paul had done (see Acts 21).

From a human perspective, Paul should have never been in that prison, and again, from a human perspective, you wouldn't blame him if he had become bitter, angry, frustrated and disillusioned. But Paul knew better than to view life from a human perspective (II Cor. 4:18)! Paul understood that from God's vantage point, there is nothing that happens that He has not either APPOINTED or ALLOWED. He understood that God is constantly orchestrating the events of our lives for our GOOD and His GLORY (Rom. 8:28-29), so anything and everything that happened in his life, Paul understood that it was simply God's way of DIRECTING him to the people to whom he was to minister — even if those people were in prison!

What an unbelievably freeing perspective! Paul was one guy who just “got it.” He understood that this life was not the real deal — that there was more to life, so much more! He recognized that this life is just the dressing room for eternity, so his own personal safety, comfort, and agenda were never the driving forces in his life. The driving force in his life was fulfilling the mission of reaching people with the gospel to the glory of God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ!

May hiding this verse in our hearts cause us to recognize that everything that takes place in our lives — everything(!), is either DIRECTING us to the people God wants to use us to reach with the gospel, or is EQUIPPING us to reach them. Having that perspective will give us a different attitude toward our circumstances, and keep us constantly reminded of how God sovereignly works in our lives to use us according to His perfect plan and ultimate glory. Let's let God nail this in our lives this week. We live where we live, we work where we work, we face what we face, our circumstances in life are as they are for one overarching purpose: “the furtherance of the gospel”! May that reality cause us to stop complaining and focusing on the negative, and cause us to take advantage of the open doors God has provided for the gospel right where He has us!

DAY 250

TODAY'S READING: I TIMOTHY 1-6

OVERVIEW: The proper use of the Law of God (chapter 1); the power of prayer and the place of women in the local church (chapter 2); the qualifications for church leaders (chapter 3); the contrast between false and faithful teachers (chapter 4); the responsibilities of the members of a local church (chapter 5); sound advice from God to servants, false teachers, the rich, and the educated (chapter 6).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Book of I Timothy is the first of three New Testament Books referred to as “Pastoral Epistles” (the others being II Timothy and Titus). These Books are obviously called “Pastoral Epistles” because they are addressed to pastors of local churches, and have to do with conducting the affairs as undershepherds in Christ's church. The instruction in these letters is very specific, and most certainly deals with situations

pastors will encounter in carrying out their biblical office, but don't let that cause you to think that these letters do not have incredibly practical ramifications for your life and ministry! These letters actually present the relationship God intends to exist between a disciple and discipler! Sure, Timothy had been given the responsibility of holding the office of pastor in the church at Ephesus, but he was also an individual member of the body of Christ. He is a real person, with real weaknesses, and real problems, and struggles just like all of us. God placed these Books in His Bible not just for pastors, but to provide every believer practical instruction concerning being a follower (disciple) of Christ on both sides of discipleship.

As we move into I Timothy today, keep in mind that Timothy was the son of a father who was a Greek and a mother who was a Jew (Acts 16:1-3). His mother's name was Eunice and his grandmother's name was Lois (II Tim. 1:5). He resided in Lystra (Acts 16:1-2; 20:4), where he was raised in the knowledge of the scriptures (II Tim. 3:15).

Upon visiting Timothy's hometown of Lystra on his second missionary journey, Paul was impressed with Timothy's testimony in his local church, and felt impressed to invite him to join him and Silas as a part of their missionary team. Keep in mind that this invitation was extended to Timothy immediately following Paul's conflict with Barnabas concerning the fact that Paul didn't want John Mark to be included on his missionary team because he was too young, too scared, and because he needed to be discipled (Acts 15:36-41). Because God is sovereign, and because He obviously has a sense of humor, He turns right around and gives Paul a fearful young man who needs to be discipled to be a part of his missionary team! Just file into your head, that when we refuse to learn the lessons from the situations God has put into place, He will simply recreate similar circumstances until we learn them!

To catch the real heart of this letter, recognize that Paul most likely led Timothy to the Lord (I Tim. 1:2, 18; II Tim. 1:2, 2:1; I Cor. 4:17) when he and Barnabas came to Lystra on their first missionary journey (Acts 14:5-7). Timothy was Paul's trusted companion, and he used him for some of the toughest assignments in the different churches (I Thess. 3:1-7; I Cor. 4:16-17). Paul goes on in scripture to describe Timothy as one with whom he was completely likeminded, and viewed serving with him as a father with his son (Phil. 2:19-22). Timothy struggled with the problem of fear (I Cor. 16:10; II Tim. 1:7), which probably led to his stomach problems, and other physical infirmities that Paul mentioned in chapter 5 and verse 23.

Paul wrote this letter because he felt the need to give young Timothy some encouragement to stay in the battle as a good soldier, warring a good warfare (1:18) in the midst of false teachers and backsliding believers in the church at Ephesus (1:3-4, 19-20). Paul had invested three solid years in this church at Ephesus (Acts 20:31), and had an intense love for them (Acts 20:37-38). Paul writes to Timothy to encourage him to stay at Ephesus, and fulfill his role, and responsibility as the church's pastor, in spite of the difficulties he faced. Paul had warned the Ephesian elders that false teachers would both enter and arise out of the church, and now that it had happened, Paul felt confident that Timothy was the man for the job of shutting the mouths of the false teachers (1:3; 4:7; 6:17), and protecting the young flock of God in that church!

This letter was written from Laodicea (see AV 1611 postscript) and sent to Timothy in Ephesus between Paul's two imprisonments in Rome. It is interesting to note that Paul desired Timothy to stay in Ephesus (a place that was "fully-purposed" to do God's work – Rev. 2:1-2) rather than join him in Laodicea (where the Christians felt they had "rights" – Rev. 3:14-18). Paul knew where God's work could most effectively be accomplished. We would do well in this age if we would just "stay in Ephesus," as opposed to "living and loving Laodicea".

Additional highlights from Paul's first letter to young Timothy:

Four things Jesus Christ is to those who know Him: Our SAVIOUR, Our HOPE, Our FATHER, and Our LORD. (1:1-2)

The lawful use of God's law is two-fold (1:8-10): 1) To reveal what sin is (Rom. 5:20, 7:7), and 2) to bring us to Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:21-24).

Paul's life of longsuffering is the pattern for our lives (1:16. See also II Cor. 11:23-28)

Standing for truth will sometimes require naming of names of those who are disobedient and that teach false doctrine. (1:18-20)

As believers, prayer is the “first” thing we should do to maintain a close relationship with God. (2:1)

No mediator (“middle man”) other than CHRIST can bring us and/or our prayers to the Father. Not Mary. Not the saints. Not a priest. ONLY Christ! (2:5)

God was manifest (i.e. shown to us; revealed) in the flesh and it is WITHOUT CONTROVERSY (3:16; I Cor. 15:1-8; Acts 1:3). Bank on it!

Refuse to be intimidated by those who say you’re too young to be doing God’s work. Preach and teach God’s truth with authority! (4:11-12a)

The desire for more will end up fooling and hurting you. (6:5-9)

Avoid oppositions of “science” falsely so called (6:20 – Note: Evolution is a religion, not a science - see below):

- * Christians believe – “In the beginning GOD...”
- * Evolutionists believe – “In the beginning DIRT...”

DAY 251

TODAY’S READING: II TIMOTHY 1-4

OVERVIEW:

Important reminders regarding faith, fear, and holding fast sound words in the last days (chapter 1); responsibilities of believers in the last days (chapter 2); the realities of living in the apostasy of the last days (chapter 3); the Apostle Paul’s final charge to preach the Word in the last days (chapter 4).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

This letter to Timothy records the last words of Paul that were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. It was written from a prison in Rome (Mamertine Prison) where Paul was being held as he awaited execution for preaching Christ during Nero’s reign, the cruel Roman Emperor who hated Christians and Christianity! Paul obviously had been arrested again since writing his first epistle to Timothy in 65 A.D. The Bible gives little detail as to Paul’s ministry between his two imprisonments, but we can conclude from scripture that he went to Nicopolis (Titus 3:12 - written in 65 A.D.) and then to Troas (4:13), where he had left his cloak, some books, and the parchments (i.e. the scripture) because of an apparent need for a quick exit. At the time of the writing of this final letter to Timothy, Paul is lonely, but he is not in despair (II Cor. 4:8-10, II Tim. 4:17). This is in spite of the fact that every one of his trusted companions had left him (except Luke - II Tim. 4:11), just as they did the Lord (except John, the beloved disciple) as the time of his execution drew near. Paul, longing to see his beloved son in the faith one last time, writes to Timothy asking him to come to Rome as soon as he possibly could (4:9, 21). Amazingly, the thrust of this letter deals with Paul encouraging Timothy not to be afraid of taking his place in the ministry of the gospel and discipleship (1:7-8; 2:2) once Paul is executed! We should all have at least one person to whom we could write a letter like this when we are on our death bed!

Additional highlights from Paul’s second letter to Timothy:

If you are experiencing fear doing the work of the Lord, you can be certain that its source is not God! It is either our own foolish insecurities and lack of faith and/or the work of our adversary Satan! (1:7)

True believers are eternally secure because they know whom they have believed (Jesus Christ), and it is He who keeps them saved until that day, not themselves! (1:12, 4:18)

We are commanded to study the Word of God to make sure that we “rightly divide it.” Without diligent “study”, it is possible wrongly divide the scripture, and end up twisting it to our own destruction (2:15. See also II Pet. 3:16).

We must not allow ourselves to become discouraged in the mission of reaching people with the gospel, realizing that the lost have been taken captive by Satan himself and are held in his snare. Their only

hope is that God would give them “repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” through the message of the gospel that has been committed to our trust (2:24-26. See also I Thess. 2:4).

Paul clearly calls the scriptures that Timothy had as a child (the Old Testament) holy, and says that they were the same scriptures inspired by God which can perfect man!

Note: These scriptures Timothy had in his possession were not the original manuscripts (they had long since perished from the earth). What he did have were copies that God had persevered that were just as inspired as the so-called originals, just like we have today in our Authorized Version! (3:15-17)

We have many TEACHERS of the Bible today (on radio, television, and in many churches) just as the Bible has predicted, but not many PREACHERS of the Book! WE MUST PREACH THE WORD! (4:2-4)

DAY 252 – WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2005

TODAY’S READING: TITUS-PHILEMON

OVERVIEW: Titus: Order and authority in the local church (chapter 1); sound doctrine for the people of the local church (chapter 2); the biblical way to deal with heretics (chapter 3). Philemon: The Apostle Paul’s letter to his friend Philemon regarding his unfaithful slave Onesimus, asking him to forgive and accept Onesimus back into his house, not just as a slave, but as a brother in the Lord.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Titus: Titus was a man that the apostle Paul often relied upon because he was trustworthy and faithful. In fact, Paul called Titus his “partner and fellow helper” (2 Cor. 8:23) in the work of the Lord. This letter from Paul to Titus was written to give instruction on how to strengthen and establish the young churches on the island of Crete. Paul wanted to make sure that Titus dealt with the Cretians, who were known for being liars, evil and lazy (see Titus 1:11. Does that sound familiar at all?)

In this letter we learn of the qualifications for leaders in the church and the absolute necessity of teaching sound doctrine (because there are many false teachers whose mouths must be stopped – Titus 1:10-11). The sound doctrine that is supposed to be taught is found in chapters 2 and 3. In these chapters we find sound doctrine for older men, older women, younger women, younger men and servants. In chapter 3, Paul commands Titus to remind all in the church of their past sinful condition and the amazing kindness and love that God has shown to all of them. He also very clearly lays out the method for dealing with heretics (those who do not hold and/or teach sound doctrine). He ends the letter with a reminder to us all to “learn to maintain good works” so that we do not become unfruitful (Titus 3:14).

Additional highlights from Paul’s letter to Titus:

Be very discerning, because false teachers profess that they know God, and can present a spiritual looking front (Titus 1:16). Upon closer examination, however, they actually deny God with the life that they live. In the end, it isn’t their profession that will matter, only God’s! Jesus said in Matthew 7:23, “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

The same grace that saves us also teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12). That is why Paul said in Romans 6:1-2, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” If you understand what Jesus did for you in saving you from your sin, you will then stand in awe of His grace daily, and sin will no longer have dominion over you! That is how grace teaches us to live a life pleasing to our Saviour!

Philemon: In this brief Book of the Bible, God paints for us a beautiful picture of grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Philemon was a personal friend of Paul, whom he had apparently had the privilege of leading to the Lord (vs. 19). One of Philemon’s slaves, a man by the name of Onesimus, had apparently stolen from his master and fled to Rome. As often is the case, one sin leads to another, so Onesimus finds himself imprisoned in Rome. It is in this Roman prison that Paul meets Onesimus (whom Paul probably recognized as being Philemon’s servant – obviously, this didn’t just happen by chance!), and leads him to the Lord. Paul realized that if Onesimus was ever to be all that God wanted him to be, he would need to make things right with his master Philemon. So Paul writes this short letter to his friend and fellow Christian, Philemon, asking him not only to receive Onesimus back into his house as a slave, but now, as a brother in the Lord!

Note some of the incredible pictures God paints for us in the letter to Philemon:

Philemon – pictures God the Father

1. He was righteous. (vs. 7 c.f. Jer. 23:6)
2. He was wealthy. (vs. 2,7,11 c.f. Hag. 2:8)
3. The church was his habitation. (vs. 2 c.f. Eph. 2:22)
4. He was a caring householder. (vs. 2,5,7 c.f. Eph. 2:19)
5. He had been violated. (vs. 11, 18-19 c.f. Rom. 3:23)
6. He was the legal owner. (vs. 16 c.f. I Cor. 6:20)

Onesimus – pictures us, as redeemed sinners

1. He was a slave. (vs. 16 c.f. Rom. 7:14)
2. He was an unprofitable servant. (vs. 11 c.f. Matt. 25:30; Rom. 5:12)
3. He desired freedom. (vs. 15 c.f. Gen. 3:1-6)
4. His quest for freedom found him imprisoned. (vs. 10 c.f. Rom. 6:17)
5. In desperation, he received God's liberating grace! (vs. 11 c.f. Eph. 2:8-9)

Paul – pictures Jesus Christ

1. He was a prisoner on behalf of the gospel. (vs. 10 c.f. Isa. 53:8; Jn. 18:28)
2. He intercedes to the wealthy householder for the unprofitable servant. (vs. 10-11 c.f. Heb. 7:25)
3. He will do nothing without the householder's permission. (vs. 14 c.f. John 6:38)
4. He was determined to pay the servant's debt. (vs. 18-19 c.f. I Tim. 2:6)
5. He asks that the rebellious be received just as He would be received. (vs. 12,17 c.f. Rom. 8:17)
6. He secures for the restored a place to dwell. (vs. 22 c.f. John 14:1-2)
7. He soon returns to the householder. (vs. 22 c.f. John 14:5)

Wow! What a book! Why don't you take a few minutes to stand in awe of God's unbelievable Word right now (Psalm 33:8).

DAY 253

TODAY'S READING: HEBREWS 1-6

OVERVIEW:

Comparing Christ to the Angels; comparing Christ to Moses; comparing Christ as our high priest to the priests of the Old Testament; comparing our rest in Christ to the rest of the Promised Land.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Book of Hebrews begins a section of the New Testament that often causes people problems. A mistake that is very easy to make, and is very often made when believers read the Word of God is viewing everything they read through "Christian" glasses. Christian glasses aren't a bad thing when you're reading a Book that is addressed to the local church (or a leader of a local church), but they can pose some pretty serious doctrinal problems if you leave them on when reading other Books of the New or Old Testament.

Like the Gospels, because the Book of Hebrews is found in the New Testament, most people leave their "local church"/"Christian" glasses on while reading this Book. That is an invitation to doctrinal disaster. One of the things that will clear up about 90% of the difficulties found in the Book of Hebrews is simply asking yourself, "To whom was the Book of HEBREWS written?" Go ahead, take a wild stab at who you think it was! Uh, was it a local church? No. Uh, was it a leader of a local church? No. How about Gentiles? Good guess, but, no. Could it have been Hebrews? Yes! You got it! Wow! You must be a seminary graduate to understand something that deep!

The Book of Hebrews was written to Hebrews. Imagine that! And do you remember what we talked about concerning the Jews when we entered into our reading of the New Testament? In terms of "rightly dividing the word of truth," the Jews/Nation of Israel is the "ancient landmark" that must be kept in place lest you enter into "the fields of the fatherless." Not placing the "Hebrews" in the Book of Hebrews will make your study of the Book a "fatherless field."

The theme of Hebrews is the superiority of Christ and the new covenant, compared to the old covenant. The key word you find in this Book is BETTER. We have a BETTER testament (7:22); a BETTER

covenant (8:6); BETTER promises (8:6); a BETTER sacrifice (9:23); BETTER blood (12:24); BETTER substance (10:34); BETTER hope (7:19); a BETTER country (11:16); a BETTER resurrection (11:35). This also provides an easy breakdown of the book:

Chapters 1-2	Christ is better than the angels.
Chapter 3	Christ is better than Moses.
Chapter 4	Christ is better than Joshua.
Chapters 5-7	Christ is a better High Priest.
Chapters 8-13	Christ established a better covenant.

Historically, the Book of Hebrews was written to reveal the establishment of the new covenant by Jesus Christ. This Book is actually the written form of what the Apostle Paul did when entering cities for the first time to proclaim the gospel. Acts 17:2-3 reveals that Paul's standard operating procedure when entering into a city, was to first go to the synagogue, and reason from the scriptures how that Christ was the Messiah. In those synagogues, to whom would Paul have been speaking? Predominantly Hebrews, right?

Doctrinally (or prophetically), the Book of Hebrews is written for the benefit of Jews during the Tribulation Period. We know from Romans 11 that God is not finished dealing with the Nation of Israel. As we've discussed previously, on God's timetable we are presently living in a parenthesis called the Church Age. After the rapture of the church, God will once again deal directly with the Nation of Israel.

If you were a Jew in the Tribulation, and you realized that you and your people had missed the Messiah when Christ came the first time, as you look through the table of contents for the New Testament, what Book do you think you would be inclined to read? How about the one addressed specifically to you? The Book of HEBREWS!

We can, however, still learn a tremendous amount about the new covenant and Christ's sacrifice for us even though the Book of Hebrews is not written directly to the church. It does clearly reveal how Christ is the reality of the pictures and types contained in the Old Testament. It also contains some of the clearest teaching on the effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice, how that from God's perspective, it was "one sacrifice for sins for ever".

There are three clear warning passages contained in the first six chapters of Hebrews. They are as follows:

- 2:1-4
- 3:7-4:13
- 5:11-6:20

These warning passages are usually a place where many people lose their neck. Historically, these passages apply in two ways. First, to those Hebrews that had already placed their faith in Christ, these are an exhortation to hold fast to that faith. This would be similar to the teaching we see in Galatians where Paul actually calls believers "foolish" even though they had trusted Christ. Second, to those Hebrews who had not placed their faith in Christ alone, these warnings serve as a call to salvation. They need to realize Christ is the fulfillment of what they say is true (the Old Testament), and they need to embrace the new covenant Christ has established.

Doctrinally, these warning passages serve as an exhortation to Hebrews during the Tribulation to remain true to Christ and endure until the end. This corresponds to Christ's teaching in Matthew 24:13 that those who endure until the end shall be saved. As we saw in Matthew 24, the context of that passage is not the Church Age, but rather, the time immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ, the Tribulation.

DAY 254

TODAY'S READING: HEBREWS 7-10

OVERVIEW:

Christ's priesthood superior to the Levitical priesthood; the old covenant was a shadow of the real; the old covenant sacrifices were temporary; Christ's sacrifice is permanent.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The chapters in today's reading provide one of the most complete explanations about the superiority of the Christ and the new covenant when compared with the old covenant. God begins by identifying Christ as a Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Notice, Christ is not a priest after the Levitical priesthood started with Aaron. The story of Melchisedec mentioned in chapter 7 is from Genesis 14:17-20. The Levitical priesthood was comprised of men who were sinners. These men first had to offer sacrifices for themselves, and then for the people. These men had to offer sacrifices daily. However, Christ was not from this priesthood! He is a High Priest after Melchisedec. Christ was not a sinner. Christ does not have to offer sacrifices daily. Christ is a High Priest forever because He lives forever and makes intercession for us. Perfection could never come from the Levitical priesthood; it could only come from a different priesthood and different priest. Our perfection comes from our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God also reveals something very interesting in chapter 8. The sanctuary and tabernacle of the old covenant were merely a shadow of the real sanctuary and tabernacle inhabited by God. Think about the concept of a shadow. It can give an outline. It can help someone understand what something is – a person, a tree, a car, etc. However, it is not the real thing. Can you imagine someone wanting to have a conversation with your shadow? Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? That's God's point. He is the real thing. His sanctuary and tabernacle are the reality, not the shadow. His High Priest (Christ), is the perfect High Priest. Yet, many at that time still chose to hold on to a shadow instead of embracing the reality. Many do the same thing today. Religion is merely a shadow. There is nothing real in religion. It may make people feel better to go to church, to give their money, to sing nice songs, to be the best person they can be, but none of these things can change the reality of their sin. People still embrace the shadow instead of embracing the reality, Jesus Christ.

The old covenant revealed in itself that it was not sufficient. The holy of holies in the old covenant could only be entered into one time per year on the Day of Atonement. This revealed that the way into the holiest of all (God's tabernacle – not the earthly one) was not yet revealed. It was simply a figure, a shadow, imposed by the law until the "time of reformation". Notice, none of this could perfect the conscience of even the high priest offering the gift, let alone the rest of the people. But then the "time of reformation" did come, and we're not talking about Martin Luther! The real High Priest showed up. An everlasting High Priest. The High Priest of the true tabernacle. The blood offered by this High Priest was not the blood of bulls and goats, but was His own blood – the blood of God! This sacrifice can purge our conscience. This blood established a new covenant.

And how much greater this new covenant! The blood of bulls and goats will be able to take away sin. But the blood and sacrifice of the new covenant is different because it was offered by a different High Priest. This Priest, this man, the Lord Jesus Christ offered ONE sacrifice for sins forever! There is no other sacrifice needed nor desired by God. You and I can't offer any sacrifice for sins. Sometimes we think we can. We think we can "sacrifice for sins" by feeling really, really bad about our sin (almost trying to do penance), or, when we sin, we think we can "sacrifice" for it by giving more, reading more, praying more, or witnessing more. But, do you realize how much all of these "sacrifices" actually accomplish concerning our sin? NOTHING! We can't add anything or take anything away from Christ's one sacrifice! We must trust His sacrifice, not our own. That is precisely why the false gospel that is preached by Roman Catholicism cannot save. It is a message that says Christ is still being sacrificed for sin (the mass). It is a message that says that although you're forgiven, you must still pay for your sin (purgatory). If someone wants to pay for their sin, they certainly have the option to do so. But God makes it clear what the payment is – DEATH! (Romans 6:23) That's why Christ said those that trust in Him shall never see death. It's not a physical death, but a spiritual death that has eternal consequences. May we simply trust the once offered sacrifice of our perfect High Priest, and rest completely in Him. May we proclaim the message of the new covenant so that others may hear.