

Ron Armstrong • May 2 & 3, 2020 Letters from Prison:

Who's Got Trouble? We've Got Trouble

Philip. 3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

[2] Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. [3] For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh-- [4] though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: [5] circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; [6] as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

[7] But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. [8] What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ [9] and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. [10] I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [11] and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

A. Problems don't come up, they pile up.

1. At Philippi they had three at the same time:
 - a. Persecution.
 - b. Division in the church. "Be like-minded."
 - c. Judaizers. They wanted new Gentile believers to look like Jews: circumcision, dietary laws, Sabbath keeping.
2. Paul's argument against the "Judaizers":
 - a. They are self-righteous.
 - b. I have more reason to be self-righteous.
 - c. My self-righteousness is worthless.

- d. Peter and James settled this in Acts 15.
3. So how do you live "happy" with a passel of problems?

B. You work to keep perspective. (Hard when scared.)

1. When we have more than one problem, we tend to respond as if they were equally important.
2. Begin by separating and evaluating.
 - a. Is this a large problem or a small one? (Most are smaller than they feel.)
 - b. Am I overreacting? (Commit to moderating your reactions. High emotion will lead to low effectiveness.)
 - c. Am I creating a problem to distract myself?
 - d. If someone told me this story, what counsel would I give them?

C. You work to live in community. (Hard when hurting.)

1. Living in community requires leaving room for differences of opinion, perspective, and priorities.
2. Three things people often value more than community:
 - a. Privacy. The result is loneliness.
 - b. Convenience. The result is emptiness.
 - c. Freedom to disconnect. The result is you end up with superficial relationships.
3. Understanding the two main church analogies can help you understand how community works:
 - a. Church is family. (But a healthy one.)
 - b. It's one body, so all the parts are valued, cared for, and accountable.
4. The real benefit of living in community is that pain is just easier to bear when we go through it together.