

Destruction
Wednesday Online Bible Study
6/10/20

Introduction:

- Philippians 1:27-28 – ²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.
- We will focus on verse 28 where Paul says “This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation...”
- This reminds us that the Gospel is a message of destruction, not just salvation.

What is Destruction?

- The Greek word ἀπόλεια (*apoleia*) can be translated destruction, waste, or ruin.
- But is this verse referring to a temporary ruin or an eternal ruin? Is it ruin on this earth or after death?
- In verse 28, Paul compares the destruction of the opponents of the Gospel with the salvation of the Christians in Philippi. But what does “salvation” mean? Couldn’t salvation be referring to an earthly deliverance?
- In this text he tells them that “whether I come and see you or am absent” live a life “worthy of the Gospel of Christ.”
- In Philippians 2:12-13, he almost repeats himself again saying, “Not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you...” God works in their salvation here as well as earlier in Phil 1:28 where salvation was “from God.”
- Salvation in these two chapters is not referring to a temporary salvation or deliverance. It is his soul’s salvation—a state of being right with God and reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ.
- When we walked through Philippians 1:19, I argued that the word “deliverance” which is the same Greek word for salvation was also referring to Paul’s soul’s salvation, not deliverance from prison.
- Therefore, when Paul compares the opponents’ destruction to the Christian’s salvation, he is referring to the afterlife.
- Is this destruction eternal or will God annihilate the soul? Will people suffer consciously forever under the judgment of God? This can be a long conversation, but in short, it is eternal. The word eternal is applied to both the unrighteous and the righteous in Matthew 25:46: “And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”
- So we should not think of the word “destruction” as totally gone as the view of annihilationism suggests. It is eternal. On this Douglas Moo writes in the book *Hell Under Fire*, “The words need not mean ‘destruction’ in the sense of ‘extinction.’...None of the key terms usually has this meaning in the Old and New Testaments. Rather, they usually refer to the situation of a person or object that has lost the essence of its nature or function...The key words for ‘destroy’ and ‘destruction’ can also refer to land that has lost its fruitfulness...In none of these cases do the objects cease to exist; they cease to be useful or to exist in their original, intended state.” Souls separated from God for an eternity will not exist in their intended state.

The Gospel is Good News, and Bad

- Paul tells the Philippians that when they were “striving side by side for the faith of the gospel”, it would result in a “clear sign” of destruction for the unbeliever and salvation for the believer (verses 27-28).
- Paul warns again of the bad news of “destruction” in Philippians 3:19: “Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”
- Paul declares in Romans 1:16-17, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.” That’s good news for those who believe.
- But then he jumps straight into the bad news in verse 18: “¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” Paul spends from Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20 indicting both Jews and Gentiles as sinners who will face that wrath of God. And then he returns in Romans 3:21 to further explaining that sinners can be justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

- We cannot believe that the Gospel is simply a message of love. It’s one of wrath too.
- Because it includes a message of wrath, it is not a neutral message to those who choose to reject Jesus. 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”
- Healthy churches that follow Paul’s commands in Philippians 1:27-28 will be a clear sign of the coming destruction of those who reject Jesus Christ.
- Therefore churches that are devoted to Jesus will suffer like Jesus did. We can probably expect with deeper commitment to the Bible, we will have more persecution. And we will pray that with deeper commitment to the Bible, we will draw the humble more faithfully to the cross.