

Radiant Church, May 28, 2017
Mike Rydman

Joy in Suffering
Philippians 1:12-30

Philippians 1:12-14 *I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

“My imprisonment is for Christ.” Paul is in prison because Jesus wants him there, for Jesus’ reasons

Human suffering and death are a part of our world - a result of the curse of Genesis 3

“Suffering for Jesus” is different from suffering from the results of our own sin
We can all control our decisions
But none of us can control the consequences of our decisions

Paul is excited about the positive results of his suffering for Jesus

His suffering is leading other believers to be courageous in sharing their faith...and in being willing to suffer for their faith themselves

But often, our suffering can happen at different levels...

Philippians 1:15-18 *Some indeed preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.*

Paul has been personally hurt by other leaders in the Church who have used Paul’s incarceration as an opportunity to gain influence and followers - likely by bad-mouthing Paul in the process.

Can we experience joy in seeing Jesus proclaimed, even if some do it motivated by rivalry; even if it hurts us personally?

Unlike anything else, suffering leads us into profound communion with Jesus, our Savior who willingly suffered for us

Paul now reiterates the theme of this letter to the Philippian Church: taking joy in the gospel, no matter the circumstances...

Philippians 1:19-20 *Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.*

“deliverance” not necessarily from death, but from present suffering
This is our word “salvation” - ultimate deliverance

2 Timothy 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom*

Paul asking God to help him to “suffer well” for Jesus’ honor

The prayers of the Philippians are really for the “ample supply” of the Holy Spirit’s comfort and resources for Paul

There are times, shown many times in the Book of Acts, for example, Where believers are given an extra dose, and extra capacity for the Holy Spirit for a given situation

Philippians 1:21 *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*

If he continues to live, it’s all for Jesus
If he is to be executed by the Romans, his death is the greater win

The core statement for our confidence in Jesus
The joy that results in knowing our identity and our eternity in Christ

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Philippians 1:22-27 *If I am to live in the flesh that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.*

Paul’s states his continuing life’s purpose: for their progress and joy in the faith, that would result in their being and giving glory to God

Paul was willing to delay his glorious departure to Jesus for what was best for his converts

And Paul knows that if God spares him, and allows him to see the Philippians again, that would really encourage them

For Paul, death is the glorious possession of Christ; life is a glorious bearing of fruit

Philippians 1:27-28 *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 that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but for your salvation, and that from God.*

“manner of life” is really “your manner of life as citizens”

Live as worthy citizens of your heavenly homeland

Philippi was a colony of Rome in Macedonia

The church there was a colony of heaven in Philippi

“Progress and joy in the faith” described:

standing firm in one spirit - unity as family in the Holy Spirit

working together in the gospel mission to make disciples - unity

as missionaries for Jesus the Son

not fearful of adversaries - not afraid of suffering for the gospel -

unity as servants of God the Father

A clear sign”

Our “opponents” see the difference, though they’ll continue to ignore and even justify their own sin/rebellion against God

The loyalists to the Roman establishment saw the Christians as despised the church’s un-Roman-ness

The Philippians citizens despised the Christians for living rebukes of their pagan way of life

But if our salvation is worth suffering for, we will suffer well

Because, when we are joyful in the midst of suffering, our own lives become evidence of the power of the gospel

Philippians 1:29-30 *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.*

We are called to suffer with Jesus, and for Jesus.

We are not motivated in our suffering to survive, but to know Jesus better

The suffering may be different for each of us, but the reason we suffer is what unifies us. We are unified in Him.

Amazingly, we can face even the most difficult situations with joy. We are called to a joy that defies any explanation by the world's categories

The suffering that comes to a Christian is not a sign of God's neglect, but rather a proof that grace is at work in his or her life.

We are recipients of the gospel

Our sins have been paid for by Christ himself

One day, along with Paul we will receive "the crown of righteousness" from Christ our Lord (2 Timothy 4:8)

And we will then together all praise Him, saying "You won it, You wore it, You kept it, You gave it to me. All glory to God!"