

**Text: Phil 1.18-20**

I've decided to devote our Sunday afternoons along with Wednesdays for preparing for our upcoming quizzing time in Philippians.

Last time we talked about verses 9-18, Paul's prayer for the Philippians and his discussion of the consequences of his imprisonment.

We will just inch forward a couple of verses this afternoon, picking up v. 18 again and going forward a couple of verses.

Read Phil 1.18-20

In this message I want to focus on Paul's spirit in the middle of trying circumstances.

**Total Commitment**

We all know what it is to have trying experiences, to carry the anxiety of deep concern over things that are going on in our lives. We may know things are not right between us and others, we may not be able to quite put our finger on it, we may wrestle with it and struggle and worry. We might lose sleep. We might become testy with others.

There are a lot of ways we can find ourselves down and, in our depression, try to bring others down to our level.

How can we turn our spirits around so we can be a blessing in trying circumstances? That's the question our passage answers.

**Proposition:** The key to joy in trials is total commitment to exalting Jesus Christ.

**I. Two Concerns**

A. The "this" of v. 19 points to the troubles of vv. 15-17

1. We spoke of this last time

2. Paul's imprisonment emboldened others to preach the gospel

a. Some preached it boldly because they were *inspired* by Paul's testimony

b. Some preached because they sought an opportunity to advance themselves (since Paul was out of the way)

Both groups were preaching the true gospel

3. Paul's philosophy was that as long as the true gospel was preached, he rejoiced
4. But this was not *all as it should be*: the seeds of division in the church were there
  - a. Paul would not stay in prison forever
  - b. The church would go on functioning after Paul was gone
  - c. If you have self-seekers in a church, that is not a good thing

Paul rejoiced in the preaching of the gospel, but the division was still a concern

## B. The other concern is Paul's predicament: he is imprisoned

1. He hoped for release, partly expected it (see 1.25, 2.24)
2. His release was not certain
  - a. He will discuss the possibility of death in vv. 21-24
  - b. In Nero's courts, life was cheap, justice was uncertain
  - c. There remained a real possibility of death
3. Consequently, Paul was concerned

How would you react after two years (roughly) imprisonment with no trial, and a date with Nero coming up?

Paul's circumstances produced concerns — just as we experience concerns. We can get that sinking feeling in our stomach, that sense of impending doom, that feeling that our world is in bad shape, the fear of facing tomorrow.

But Paul says, "Yes, and I will rejoice..." How?

## II. Personal Confidence

### A. Confidence in deliverance

1. The word "deliverance" is often translated "salvation"
  - a. Paul is already a "saved" believer — he doesn't mean his personal salvation

b. Word is also used for

- 1) Physical healing (not in view here)
- 2) Personal wellbeing (probable meaning here)

2. Paul's confidence is that "this" (prison, envious brethren) will turn out for his well being

In other words, his circumstances don't control his spirit, he has a "positive faith attitude"

This isn't merely "the power of positive thinking" — he has something to rest his faith on

B. Confidence in the means

1. The prayers of the saints in Philippi

"We may not be able to fully explain why God has ordained prayer as a vehicle whereby He works in the world, or exactly how prayer works. Nevertheless Scripture is unmistakably clear that prayer does affect objective change."<sup>1</sup>

- a. When the world says, "thoughts and prayers," are you comforted?
- b. When a believer says, "I am praying for you," what then?
- c. The prayers of saints ought to encourage you (and you should earnestly pray for one another)

2. Provisions from the Spirit

- a. This is not simply the presence of the Spirit
- b. But tangible resources brought by the Spirit for Paul's personal needs
  - 1) The occasion of the letter was a financial gift from Philippi
  - 2) No doubt the gift arrived "just at the right time"
  - 3) This gift was a provision of the Spirit

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Phil 1.9.

- c. The provision of the Spirit could also be
  - 1) Sending along another brother to encourage and strengthen the prisoner
  - 2) A brother making some intercession in the legal system
  - 3) And the personal communion and fellowship that comes from the Spirit when a believer is in trouble

Paul had learned to rely on the Spirit. When we are in trouble, by faith we can access the Spirit and have real joy in troubling circumstances

### C. Confidence in the future

1. Paul is confident for the future also: "I will not be put to shame"
2. The same supply for the present bolstered his hope for the future
  - a. Prayers of saints
  - b. Provision of the Spirit

Paul's approach to his concerns was quiet confidence in the working of God for his future.

Not just a foolish positivism, a reliance on real spiritual help

But there is something else needed, something internal...

## III. Total Commitment

### A. The apostle eagerly looked forward to the future

1. Word "earnest expectation" has the idea of the neck stretched out, standing on "tippy toes"
2. As when a watchman looks earnestly for a coming messenger

Or those occasions when I pace back and forth in our living room, watching out the windows when someone special is driving to our house from the ferry...

- I know roughly when they will be getting there
- I can see half a mile down the hill and out onto Sooke Rd

- I look and look and look for that car I know is coming

Paul is looking forward to the next thing in his life, where he will again be called upon to serve God

B. Paul is not certain of the outcome: “whether by life or by death”

1. As mentioned, he could die (and be with Christ), or live (and serve Christ)
2. Either way, he still stretches his neck out, looking for the next thing his Lord has for him

C. The reason for Paul’s positive anticipation

1. That Christ might be exalted in his body
  - a. That he would speak boldly
  - b. That he would live rightly
  - c. That he would give glory to Jesus

Now, is that what your life ambition is? Or is your life ambition to win the argument, or change your circumstances, or be a success, or be well thought of, or...?

2. This was a lifelong ambition “as always”
  - a. In our study of Acts we watched this man live out this ambition
  - b. Paul gave up everything in his life to exalt Christ

Do you have this commitment?

**Conclusion:**

**Proposition:** The key to joy in trials is total commitment to exalting Jesus Christ.

May God help us all to join with Paul in that commitment.