

Philippians 1: Rejoicing in the Advance of the Gospel

This SUMMER we're going to do a fly-over of Philippians: 1 message from each chapter

Let me ask you some questions:

1. What's on your bucket list?
2. Does your life ever surprise anyone, in a GOOD WAY?
3. If someone were to follow you for 2 months what would he/she say that your life is rooted in?
4. Is your joy determined by your circumstances?

The overall theme of Phil is rejoicing- as you read through the letter you see the words "joy, and rejoice" all through the text. Those are the words that become the soundtrack of the letter.

Chara (Joy)

Definition: Delight in God for the beauty and worth of who he is.

Opposite: Hopelessness, despair.

Counterfeit: Elation that rests in blessings not the Blessor. A joy that can be lost because of circumstances.

This is a LETTER to real people living in the real world of the Roman Empire. Their problems and struggles with a life of faith in a pagan culture are very real, as is Paul's imprisonment. This is not "ivory tower" theology. Paul is writing to people he knows – he planted that church in his travels – Acts 16.

The original core group was made up of a well to do business woman – Lydia; a 'demon possessed' slave girl who was a fortune teller; a prison guard (probably a former soldier who was well schooled in how to mistreat a prisoner).

Paul has been gone for a while, is in prison and he writes the church a letter to give them an update on his situation and to instruct them. He's not writing a theological textbook for scholars- this is written to everyday believers like you and me.

Imagine the surprise of the original audience when Paul's update included the words of v. 12

12 Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, 13 so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ* has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, 14 and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; 16 the latter *do it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; 17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Philippians #1 – In This I REJOICE – v. 18

After two years in prison and house arrest in a Roman jail what word do you think would best describe your attitude? Happy, bitter, angry, trusting, ???

Here in Philippians we get a glimpse into something that can only be explained by the Holy Spirit – a heart and life of REJOICING while in prison.

In one sense the people of Philippi wouldn't be surprised because of what they knew of Paul in Act 16 – while in prison, at midnight, Paul and Silas were singing praise to God- a midnight hymn sing.

Now years later Paul write back to this church to encourage them and his letter is filled with the theme of rejoicing.

“joy” 5 times

“rejoice” 9 times ; at least once in each chapter

verses 12-18

While these are not the most 'famous' verses they do show us the first thing that Paul says he “rejoices” in. v 18 he doubles down on it in v. 18 – that Christ would be proclaimed, no matter what.

No matter what the circumstance, no matter how it impacts me “I rejoice that Christ is proclaimed”.

V. 12 “my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel”

Most people would think that Paul's imprisonment would be the end of his ministry, but Paul rejoices that his ministry expanded, even to Caesar's household – 4:22

EX: Prison may be where ministry begins: Chuck Colson; Thomas Tarrants, President Emeritus of the C.S. Lewis Institute. Equipped interview [Consumed by Hate, Redeemed by Love](https://www.moodyradio.org/programs/equipped-with-chris-brooks/2020/06/6.15.2020-from-the-kkk-to-the-cross-of-christ/) He went from KKK member who found Jesus in prison to a man who works for racial reconciliation.

<https://www.moodyradio.org/programs/equipped-with-chris-brooks/2020/06/6.15.2020-from-the-kkk-to-the-cross-of-christ/>

This testimony from hate to love is similar to what happened to Paul himself. As Saul, the Pharisee, he hated the message and followers of Jesus. Then he encountered Christ and became a follower. It stunned those who had known of his past.

Ch 1 shows how God gives Sovereign connections in our natural sphere of influence where we can make Christ known.

Paul's current Providential sphere of influence is in prison and what he is excited about is that people are coming to know Christ because of it, and people are being encouraged to share Christ because of it – v. 12-14.

Paul wants his audience to be encouraged as they face opposition. He tells them about...

#1 THE ADVANCE OF THE GOSPEL AMONG HIS CAPTORS v. 13 – hardened Roman soldiers did not intimidate Paul. They had to deal with him. Paul had a captive audience for his proclamation of Christ. Paul was encouraged because the message penetrated Caesar's household 4:22.

#2 GOSPEL ADVANCING AMONG BELIEVERS v.14 Paul's example sparked a fresh outbreak of evangelism in Rome as believers were given fresh boldness to speak the Word.

Don't WE ALL NEED FRESH BOLDNESS AND COURAGE to proclaim Christ?

Have you ever had a conversation that was low risk – weather, sports, food, movies, etc- that took a turn to spiritual things? Did you feel a reluctance when that happened? That's when we need fresh boldness. Imagine how the early believers felt in Rome, or how many believers around the world may feel today.

Paul inspired courage among believers to proclaim Christ. Courage is contagious. Does He inspire US TODAY?

Let's pray that it doesn't take a replay of Oct 16, 1555 when Latimer and Ridley were put to the stake to be burned because of their proclamation of the gospel, in "Christian" England.

Latimer said, 'Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as shall never be put out.'

What can we do??

One small habit that will move us in the direction of being concerned for the progress of the gospel is that of regularly inviting folks to church.

<<Wait, How? When should we?>>

Andy Stanley at Northpoint gives some cues: 3 "NOTS" when you hear someone say...

- "Things are not going well right now"
- "I was not prepared for this..."
- "I'm not from here"

What's on your bucket list?

Paul's bucket list was short – make Jesus known – no matter what the circumstances.

That was the consuming passion of his life.

Do we see our daily routine or the significant trials that may come our way as opportunities for Christ to be made known?

Would people look at us in our daily lives and have any idea that Jesus is important to us?

Does passion for the gospel shape our lives in trials and in joy?

When we put the advance of the kingdom at the center of our aspirations, then all else is put into perspective.

All become relatively insignificant when compared to the advance and splendor of the gospel.

Are you experiencing trials? What do they reveal about you? Are you able to see where you are in relation to the gospel in the midst of the trial?

If the advance of the gospel defines you, then this perspective will liberate your soul in times of trial. Our lives are so much more than our external circumstances when our mission is seeing the gospel advanced in all things.

The "advance of the gospel" does not only mean evangelism per se. It means living in a way that points people to Christ even in the midst of trials and suffering – EX: Philip Newman, Ed Hague

<http://wedonotloseheart.com/>

Does our suffering allow for the advance of the gospel?

Our suffering is for Jesus if we acknowledge His presence, purpose and sovereignty in it.

As believers, we must take a look at our current cultural moment and ask, "What really matters to us? Is it some social or political agenda? Is it creating, defending, or polishing some perceived reputation on social media? Is it winning an argument about Covid19, masking, unmasking, lockdowns, opening up, statues, protests, the media, congress, the Supreme Court, the future of college football, etc, the list goes on and on.

I'm NOT saying that some of those things are not important, but biblically they pale in comparison to the value of Christ being proclaimed.

Does it even seem possible that you could rejoice that whatever is happening in your life is promoting the advancement of the gospel in your life?

Whether our circumstances are favorable and lift us up, or painfully difficult and drive us toward despair we have, In Jesus, a greater calling, purpose, and reason for being here – to make Him known.

Paul says v. 12-18 because of what he says in v. 21 – the famous verse...”For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”

That’s not just a nice verse – it is to be an organizing reality for our lives. THAT CHALLENGES ME.

I don’t know if I want to even go here, but let me ask, “If a random group of people watched a video of your life or mine, of the past 2 years, or 2 months, how would they fill in the blank for you or me?....

”For ___name_____ to live is _____

You may be thinking, “But I’m not the apostle Paul”

Neither was he until he became a Christian.

Supernatural Joy is SOMEONE we meet before it is something we experience.

Do you know Him?

MOVING FORWARD

We have to work hard to be people who KEEP our eyes on the prize of the greater progress of the gospel..

If we know Christ, then there will be a growing desire to see Him exalted in our lives in every way and in all circumstances.

This perspective of “Christ shall even now be exalted” can have a heart altering impact on our souls even during our various trials.

This is not saying that trials are fun. It is saying that our souls prosper in trials when we seek the advancement of the gospel in them as we say with Paul, “What then? Only that in every way Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes and I will rejoice.”

Two friends talking, one younger, the other older and wiser. The younger was facing trials and the older friend with loving wisdom said, “**No moment will ever again be like this. Let there be something for Jesus in it.** It is not something for Jesus if we dwell on our misery or if let opportunities pass without a word about our Lord or if we think that any hand other than His has brought us to that place. **It is something for Jesus if we think and speak about Him for his glory. It is something for Him if we acknowledge and trust His all sovereign will.**”

Jesus is the ultimate example of how something tragic and evil can be used for the progress of the Gospel. Without the cross there is no gospel.

We get to remember and celebrate the advance of the gospel as we come to the Table.

If you don’t discern and recognize the Good News of the work of Christ in the table, then don’t partake.

If you are holding on to living for your own agenda rather than God’s, then don’t partake.

But if you want fresh strength and boldness from the Gospel, then this table is for you. This table is NOT for super-saints who have it all together. It is for those who see their need for Christ on a daily basis.

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