

## **Philippians: Defiant Joy – Week 2**

### **Philippians 1:19–26**

Circumstances often throw and defeat people. The maturity of a person can be seen by how well they handle the things that happen to them. Those things that affect a person with mood changes range from mild to severe. The one thing that a believer must do is to learn to live above circumstances — to keep their witness strong.

As believers, I think it's fair to say that we understand our focus and trust should be on and in God rather than our circumstances. Paul's joy was based in the faithfulness of God.

We have begun a series on the book of Philippians, and we will examine the source of Paul's defiant joy while he lived under house arrest in Rome. The apostle Paul was a light to the Philippians, in spite of his circumstances.

Paul was a prisoner in Rome, imprisoned for over two years. He was waiting to appear before the Supreme Court of Rome: he was facing a trial before Nero, the Roman Emperor, and he was innocent. He had done nothing that should have caused his arrest and imprisonment. Yet there he was, and he was having to wait the arrival of his Jewish prosecutors with their trumped-up and malicious charges. True, he had some privileges—renting his own house and receiving friends—but these privileges were minor when the strains of his sufferings are seen.

Our passage for the day is found in Philippians 1 **(page 921 of your Pew Bible)**.

**Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**

**<sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I**

shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup> But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup> **Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. (Philippians 1:18b-26 ESV)**

As Paul looks to the future, he opens with a remarkable declaration of joy-filled confidence in his deliverance:

**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... (vv. 18b, 19).**

The word Paul uses here for deliverance is generally translated salvation and usually refers to the final deliverance of believers at the last judgment when they stand vindicated before God.

We, too, will endure hard times and ultimately arrive at our final destination in the same way: by relying on the sufficiency of the Spirit of Christ.

Aside from Paul's confidence in the sovereignty of God, there was something else that sustained Paul — namely, the prayers of the Philippians and the Spirit of Christ.

### **Your prayers matter!**

God uses the prayers of His people to provide strength to His people. It's good to ask others to pray for us, and for us to pray for others. It is profoundly encouraging to know that people are praying for you, and how important it is that you are praying for others.

James wrote

**Pray for one another so that you might be healed. The prayer of a godly person is powerful. Things happen because of it. (James 5:16 NIRV)**

Paul knew that the Holy Spirit would supply whatever he needed to get through his circumstances. No matter what our need is or how great our need is, the Holy Spirit will deliver us.

Paul expressed this same confidence to Timothy

**The Lord will save me when anyone tries to hurt me, and he will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. Glory forever and ever be the Lord's. Amen. (2 Timothy 4:18 NCV)**

Paul was entirely confident in his ultimate deliverance. The prayers of the Philippian believers would encourage Paul, and the empowerment of the Spirit would enable him to meet each new challenge. It is the same today. We do well to pray for each other, especially for those undergoing challenging times. Our prayers effect not only the confidence but the deliverance of our fellow believers.

Paul was facing death. He did not know if he was going to die or continue living. If he were to be executed, he wanted to be as faithful as ever and to magnify Christ in death. If he were to be declared innocent and set free, he wanted to continue to magnify Christ.

We are empowered by His Spirit! You can live courageously for Christ because if they kill you, then you will be with Christ! (But to be clear, Paul isn't promoting martyrdom.)

Paul desires to represent Christ both in his living and or his dying. His mind was not on his circumstances; it was on Christ.

This is how you honour Jesus above all things: you care more about His glory than your glory, and you live this way with courage.

**You show what's most important to you by how you live.**

Will we always live perfectly for Christ? No. The good news, there's grace here! We need His grace to represent Him.

Paul makes this bold confession of faith. **For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (v 21)**

We face this same dilemma whenever we see a believing loved one face death. We are pulled in both directions. However, we know that because of the certain future of every believer, it is better for them to leave this world to be with Christ. That future is much better. To die is gain.

Gain means to receive a great profit. The grave will graduate him to glory. Death will not be a tragedy, but a triumph. Death for the Christian is always far better.

Later, he would tell Timothy,

**... my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. <sup>8</sup> And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:6–8 NLT)**

When he thought about death, he thought about being in the presence of Christ.

**We are full of courage and would much prefer to leave our home in the body and be at home with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:8 GNT)**

Paul says his **desire to depart and be with Christ** (v. 23). This is not a mere passing whim. Rather, it represents a passion, a growing zeal within to be with Christ.

The word depart has a twofold meaning. It is the picture of breaking camp, packing up, and moving on to a new location. The same picture is true of the believer when he departs this life. He is not ceasing to exist; he is simply breaking camp and moving on to a new campsite, in fact, a perfect campsite.

Paul knew death was better, but not just better—better by far! Even though death is better, Paul decided that he should stay for the benefit of the body of Christ.

The internal conflict between what is **far better (v. 23)** and what is **more necessary (v 24)**.

**What is more necessary for others trumps what is far better.**

This is the internal battle that every Christian faces, the struggle between what I want to do and what is best for others (though it is not always life-and-death decisions).

What is the highest good? What's life about?

It means helping people grow in their faith. It means helping people have more joy in Christ.

Paul said earlier in our chapter,

**<sup>12</sup> I want you to know ... that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. (vv. 12-13)**

Paul spread the gospel through the Praetorian Guard, the elite of the Roman army. These soldiers were the Imperial Guard of Rome; these soldiers guarded and were chained to the wrist of Paul day and night for two years, young men who were the elite of Roman youth.

Paul was not ruled by circumstances but by trust in the providence and faithfulness of God. This gave him peace, joy, and hope in all situations. He had a deep conviction that no matter what happened in his life, God would work all things out for both his good and the good of all parties involved. Paul wasn't focused so much on his situation or his options. Instead, he was focused on Jesus Christ, his redeemer and deliverer.

The lesson for us is this: we must not let circumstances get us down—not let them defeat our testimony and witness for Christ, no matter what they are ...

When we are living for Christ, we must know that God is in control. He will

strengthen us to bear whatever circumstances befall us. We can use the circumstances to witness to the power of Christ, to the eternal hope He gives of forgiveness and of living forever.

**<sup>13</sup> I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**<sup>14</sup> I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them. (Romans 15:13-14 NLT)**