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Philippians The Blueprint for Joy #5

Before we begin our study of the Word, will you allow me to step out of character. This passage we'll study today always takes me back to my high school days when I studied Shakespeare. There's a great soliloquy given by Hamlet that I'm reminded of whenever I read this passage of Scripture. Hamlet, too, was struggling with life and decisions he must make and he says this 'to be or not to be'.

Would you do me a favor and write on your bulletin 3 words that describe your life right now, today. Later this morning, in our message, I'll ask you again about these 3 words you've written down. We continue our study of the letter Paul wrote to the church at Philippi. Thus far we see Paul expresses his joy for the fond memories he had of his time there. Remember, Paul started this church on his second missionary journey and wrote this letter about AD 62. He already had answered 2 questions that the church had about his personal condition and about how well the progress of the Gospel was doing. Paul knew the difference between happiness and joy. Happiness may last a fleeting moment but joy is the continuum of our lives because it is based on our relationship with Jesus. The theme of chapter 1 is joy in the midst of troubles. It seems in Paul's case the epitome of joy is reached when circumstances are their most negative because then he could rely totally on the relationship he had with Jesus and the faith he placed in Christ. Now this week we look at how Paul had joy in spite of his impending death. Our support text is Philippians 1:18-21.

Philippians 1:18-21

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.²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

It seems like Paul is asking these same questions that Hamlet asked...whether he would live or die, whether he would be or not be. Paul literally got to the point where death was of no consequence. He got to the point where troubles and struggles were of no consequence. Paul is a living example of everything embodied in the statement of Christ "take up your cross and follow Me".

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Paul says he could care less what people thought of him or whether he lived or died. This is the ultimate level of spiritual commitment. We live in a materialistic self-serving world. People today live for a lot of things. They are not just focused on one thing like Paul was. Today let me give you 3 reasons why Paul could focus completely on Christ and it will help explain why Paul penned this passage.

#1 He is confident in the Word of God.

Philippians 1:19

¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

The word “know” in the Greek is “OIDA”. For Paul, he was saying I have absolute knowledge of my fate. The entire list of things he is going through were tolerated and he could express joy because he knew how this would turn out. Remember Paul also penned Romans 8:28 which says that ‘all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose’. This statement he makes in verse 19 is the same statement that Job uttered in the midst of his trials.

Job 13:16 NIV

Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless person would dare come before him!

You can understand the word deliverance in 2 ways. First it may be in the short term, as it was for Job or it may be in the long run, as unto death, as it eventually would be for Paul. But in either case, we can rejoice.

#2 He was confident in the prayers of the saints.

Philippians 1:19

¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your ^{lb}prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Sometimes we forget that as Christians God works His purposes through the prayers of His people. I am sure it made him feel a lot better knowing he had their prayers. It was like someone saying “I’ve got your back”. They were truly on his side. Let me back that up with another couple of verses.

Romans 15:30 and James 5:16

Romans 15:30

³⁰ Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

James 5:16

⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Speaking for myself, I too find great joy in the fact that many of you are praying for Nancy and me. We have discovered over the years that there are 3 things that work in harmony for our lives. The word of God, as a lamp unto our feet, prayer – as a means of communicating with God and the Holy Spirit, indwelling us and bringing us comfort and direction.

#3 He was confident in the provision of the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 1:19-20

¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
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

The provision of the Holy Spirit... a wonderful statement. Here it means the provision given BY the Holy Spirit, not the provision which IS the Holy Spirit itself. John 14 reminds us that the Holy Spirit will be our provider. The ministries that the Holy Spirit provides for us today are the fact that He acts as our prayer partner... all of our prayers go to God perfectly. He is our Comforter. He is our Guide.

He is the gatekeeper to our conscience, helping us in all our decision making. I'm glad that Paul expressed his confidence in what the Holy Spirit provided for him. We look to Paul as one of the best examples of a follower of Christ. Ask yourself. Is anyone looking at you as an example of a follower of Jesus?

Conclusion

I asked you earlier to write 3 words that describe your life. Regardless of what you have put down, can we see as Paul did, that life isn't really about us. It is as Paul confirms... our life incorporated into God. Do we see that it is not MY story or YOUR story, but it is rather HIS story.

Philippians 1:21

²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Paul sums it all up in this iconic verse. This is the capstone of this section of his letter. For me living is Christ, dying is gain. He simply means living is Christ and that his life is summed up as Christ is everything to him. He is occupied with Jesus. His life is dominated by his devotion to Christ. Maybe I can help you understand this if we personalize what Paul was saying. Let me say this to you. Fill in the blanks. For me if living is wealth, then dying is loss. For me if living is fame, then dying is loss. If living is possessions, then dying is loss. If living is my own personal sense of power and authority, then dying is loss. But if living is Christ, then and only then is dying gain. Can we echo the words of Paul as we live our lives?