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Philippians – The Blueprint for Joy #6

We continue our study in the book of Philippians, which is actually a letter which the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi. Paul had started the church and now finds himself in prison in Rome. He is incarcerated for sharing the Gospel. We have thus far discovered that Paul is a Christian who had a passion for sharing the Gospel and regardless of his less than positive circumstances, he still found joy. Why? He had learned the secret. Joy is a deep and constant condition based on our relationship with Jesus. Happiness on the other hand is rather superficial and tends to last only temporarily. So far in chapter 1 we have seen Paul display his joy in the midst of trouble, even when he had detractors and even when he discussed his impending death. Now, this week, Paul says he can find joy as long as he remains in the flesh. Our support text is Philippians 1:22-30.

Philippians 1:22-30

²² But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this will *mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know ^[b] which to choose. ²³ But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;
²⁴ yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy ^[c] in the faith,
²⁶ so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.
²⁷ Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one ^[d] mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;
²⁸ in no way alarmed by *your* opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that *too*, from God.
²⁹ For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

Paul had already confessed to us that dying would be gain but he is willing to remain in the flesh because he thought it would be beneficial to the church.

Philippians 1:22,23

²² ^[a] But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know ^[b] which to choose. ²³ But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;

In this case, living in the flesh does not mean living with fleshly desires as described in Romans 8:5 but rather it means just being a human being. Although Paul could have reaped all the benefits of heaven including being with Jesus he knows he can't propagate the Gospel from that vantage point. Paul really wanted to win people to Jesus. Paul admits it is a difficult decision. He even says given a choice I don't know. Paul is not so naïve as to think he really had a choice anyway. Ask yourself this question. If you had 5 minutes to choose between staying here on earth or going to heaven, I'm sure most of you would say I want to stay. I am enjoying my family, I'm starting a new job and we are buying a new house. Paul's life was different. None of that really mattered to him.

Philippians 1:24,25

²⁴ yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith

By the time he pens verse 24 he has convinced himself that he would rather stay and by verse 25 he seems convinced that he will be free from jail and will be with them again. Paul was a most unusual Apostle. He never wavered. He had a profound spiritual commitment in his life. It is little wonder that the spirit of God used him to write almost half of the New Testament. Let's look at verse 27

Philippians 1:27

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one ^[d]mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

After Paul finished having a meeting with himself, he shifts his focus to the condition of the church at Philippi. How many of you can remember when your teacher left the classroom. How well did we all behave? Paul seems to have some of that schoolteacher mentality in him. Paul is no longer concerned with himself. He is concerned with the church. He wants them to look in their own heart and see if there is a genuine sense of integrity there and he wants us to do the same thing. Paul reduces his exhortation to one thing and uses the word "only". Paul knew that the church at Philippi was under Roman rule and they were Roman citizens but he wanted the church to act like citizens of heaven. In Philippians chapter 3 verse 20 he actually calls them citizens of heaven.

Philippians 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

How do citizens of heaven conduct themselves? In a manner worthy of the Gospel – consistent with what the Word teaches us, displaying Christian integrity and character. If you are only going to remember one thing from today's message remember this: "A church should never live beneath its theology". It cannot live beneath the message it presents. Remember we are a new creation.

II Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he *is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

If we are truly transformed we must live like it or we discount the meaning of the word Christian. He goes on further to say whether he was with them or not he expected this in their behavior. Standing firm in one's human spirit is a necessity if we are to display Christ. We don't have to stand firm alone. We do it together.

Philippians 1:28

in no way alarmed by *your* opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that *too*, from God.

Paul says don't be alarmed by your opponent. Fear not, because it is a sign of their destruction and our salvation. It's the dividing point. They are both the work of God. Let's look at verses 29 and 30

Philippians 1:29,30

²⁹ For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

Suffering is a gracious gift for when we suffer it tells us which side we are on. Let me illustrate by telling you a story about a 7 year old boy named Mark Elardo. He was the son of a couple I had asked to come and help with a church plant Nancy and I were doing in a town called Tanjay. Mark started school and was the only Christian in his class. Every day the other children in his class would bully him and he would come home with bruises. I felt terrible about his condition and went and talked with him privately. He told me it was okay that he didn't mind if he got beat up every day. As he explained to me, he said I only get bruises but Jesus died for me so by comparison I have it easy!!!It's a point of identification with Jesus. We are not alone in our struggles. Paul went through them also. And many Christians around the world have it much more difficult than most of us here in our sanctuary today.

Conclusion

We have had certainly a lot of food for thought from these few verses. How can I best capsule them for us? Let me try. As long as we live on in the flesh, we must represent ourselves as citizens of heaven. We should never live beneath our theology. In other words, if we can't live for what we believe in, what is our life doing for the cause of Christ? We often sing "living for Jesus a life that is true, striving to please Him in all that we do". But my question to you is... what are we doing if we don't represent Christ? We should expect struggles and opposition because these are some of the defining marks of our relationship with Jesus. So, let's stand firm together and represent His kingdom here in Osaka.