

Finding Joy in Suffering

Finding Joy in Hard Times--part 3

Phil. 1:21-30; October 7, 2018

DAY 1: A battle-weary man

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

1. Paul's statement is amazing. As we saw last week, it had some important context. Last week we looked at the verses before this insightful verse. Today, we'll look at the verses immediately following this verse.

Philippians 1:22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

²³ *I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;*

²⁴ *but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.*

2. What was Paul's dilemma?

3. Paul's natural "desire" was to "call it a life." He knew something of the wondrous treasure that was waiting for him in heaven. He had been battle-tested and was battle-weary. What reasons can you think of as to why Paul could say, it was *better by far* to immediately go to heaven?

4. What reasons does Paul mention that would persuade him to keep living in this life?

5. To remain living in this life or to start living in the next life: that was his dilemma.

6. What reasons would persuade you to remain living in this life?

7. What reasons would compel you to want to start living in the next life?

DAY 2: Benefits to others

1. The term “live” does not mean physical living. To “live” means that thing for which we all strive, that “it,” as we say, “to *really* live.”

2. Paul resolves his dilemma as he always had—by choosing (a) To live for God’s purpose while he still could(!), (2) To sacrifice himself for the benefit of others in some significant ways, and (3) To set before him some clear objectives he hoped to accomplish in his ministry with people.

Philippians 1:25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,

²⁶so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

3. Paul was willing to defer his “departure” from this life for the sake of others.

a. What benefits to others did Paul mention in verse 25?

b. What benefits to others did Paul mention in verse 26?

4. As you think about your life, which of these benefits can you use to motivate you as you relate to the people in your life?

5. Under each of the items below, jot down your thoughts:

a. Paul continued to choose God’s eternal purposes over his own short-term desires.

b. Paul was willing to sacrifice for others.

c. Paul wanted to live and relate to others in ways that would bring them joy.

DAY 3: How we conduct ourselves

*Philippians 1:27a **Whatever happens, conduct** yourselves in a **manner** worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence...*

1. Paul gives the Philippian Christians important counsel, a rudder for living.
2. “*Whatever happens...*”
 - a. What “whatevers” have you had to face in your life?

- b. What “whatevers” in your possible future do you fear?

3. “*Conduct yourself ...*” Here, Paul focuses on their conduct. One of the uses of this word was in politics. It represented how citizens should behave.

*Philippians 3:19 ...Their mind is on earthly things. ²⁰ But our **citizenship** is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

4. Paul contrasts how citizens of the world and citizens of heaven (Christians) think and live. What contrasts do you see in the Phil. 3:19-20?

*Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life **worthy of the calling** you have received.*

5. This verse is very similar to our verse for today, Phil. 1:27.
 - a. What similarities do you see?

- b. What nuances of difference do you see?

6. Do you have a need for a “conduct check-up?” Perhaps you should have coffee or lunch with a good friend to share at least one need in this area of “conduct.”

DAY 4: Striving together...

Philippians 1:27b I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

²⁸ *without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God.*

1. Paul was hoping that he might be able to see these precious people again. But if he couldn't he had hopes for what he'd hear about them.

2. Re-write verse 1:27b in your own words:

3. "*Stand firm in one spirit.*"

3. What does "stand firm" mean? Paul gives us two pictures:

a. "*Contending as one man*" The Greek word is a compound word: "sun" means "with," and "athleo" meaning "athlete." Here, Paul hopes that the people in the church will pull together, to act as a team, and not as individuals "doing their own thing."

b. "*...without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.*" Paul is describing some kind of what we call "quiet bravado." There is no need to cower in fear.

4. "*...for the faith of the gospel.*"

5. What Paul hopes to see or at least hear, is that the church has rallied together, as a basketball team would rally together toward a common purpose.

6. Let's apply these pieces:

a. Are you teaming up with anyone in your church to push the gospel forward?

b. Would your efforts be of the same efforts of athletes on a basketball team? "Contending?"

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: A call to suffer for Him.

Philippians 1:29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,

³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

1. If there is one thing western Christianity has somehow missed, it would be the truths of these two verses!

2. Paul gives us a brief theology of suffering.

3. When we go through times of suffering we are very surprised! We begin to question our faith, question God, and ask God why would He allow us to suffer. Contrast this with Paul's perspective on suffering.

4. How would you describe Paul's perspective on suffering?

5. "Granted," means "privileged." We should count it a privilege to suffer for him. Why?

6. Peter has a similar theology of suffering.

1 Peter 2:19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

7. What parallels do you see in Paul's and Peter's perspectives on suffering?

8. In verse 30, Paul reminds them that he is in the same boat! What difference would that make to the younger Christians in the Philippian church?