

PHILIPPIANS: A GUIDE TO TRUE JOY

Chapter 1:12-26 Living in Christ

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THE PURSUIT OF A LIFE WITHOUT ANY SUFFERING

- In the world will do anything to avoid suffering
- Today: how to live in Christ while suffering



BUT THERE WILL BE SUFFERING

- Suffering is a general result of sin: Rom. 8:18-23
- 1/3 of Psalms are written in context of suffering
- Job/Jeremiah: 'why was I born?'
- We need a theology of suffering before we go to therapy
- Many of us don't want to talk or think about suffering because we want to live in our comfortable bubble



NEWS OVERVIEW OF THIS WEEK...

- ...
- The question is not 'will I suffer' but 'when and how will I suffer'
- You *will* suffer emotionally, relationally, mentally, financially, physically...
- You might feel right now that I don't have the right to speak about suffering to you because you have suffered so much more...
- You might be right. Listen to Paul then



PAUL'S SUFFERINGS

- 2 Cor. 11:23-28
- Now, Paul knows suffering ...!
- While writing this letter he is in prison, chained to a Roman guard 24/7
- The big plead for today is not to avoid suffering at all cost but to not waste it.



PAUL'S EXAMPLE OF PURPOSEFUL SUFFERING

12 I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. – Phil. 1:12-14



PAUL'S EXAMPLE OF PURPOSEFUL SUFFERING

- Paul's suffering served to advance the Gospel
 - Suffering can be made purposeful or pointless (bitterness, identity in your suffering)
 - It can be an opportunity (a few examples)
- Suffering can purify your motives
 - Paul had nothing worldly to gain from his sufferings
- Your suffering can make other believers bolder in their faith (Paul's example, our week...)



PAUL'S EXAMPLE OF PURPOSEFUL SUFFERING

In other words: don't waste your suffering!



PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS TODAY

RANGLIJST CHRISTENVERVOLGING 2023



FASTEST GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

Africa

Asia

Latin America

Where Christianity is declining:

Europe

Nort America



A ROMANIAN PASTOR:

“Christians are like nails, the harder you hit them, the deeper they go”



RIVALRY ON TOP OF IT

15 Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. 16 The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. – Phil. 1:15-17



RIVALRY ON TOP OF IT

- Some preachers preach out of a corrupted heart. Out of rivalry.
- They were happy with Paul's imprisonment because they were jealous because of their ambitions.
- Those are not in it for the glory of God...



HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO SUFFERING THEN?

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, 20 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. – Phil. 1:18-20



HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO SUFFERING THEN?

- Paul rejoices! What? Yes, he will rejoice. (vs. 18)
- About his suffering? NO!
- About the fact that the Gospel is being proclaimed!



WHAT'S PAUL'S SECRET?

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.



WHAT'S PAUL'S SECRET?

- Paul is torn between living and dying...
- Because there is joy in living and dying
 - This is not the despair of suicide but the Hope of the Gospel!
- C.S. Lewis: 'don't let your joy depend on something you might loose'
 - Because as soon as you loose it, it will take your joy with them..
- 'to live is Christ, and to die is gain' > try explain this to you neighbour 😊



WHAT ARE YOU LIVING FOR?

- Before I became a Christian my life was about: ...
- What is the one thing, that if taken away from you, would make you feel it's not worth living anymore (miserable, worthless, invisible)?
- What does your joy depend on? Comfort, money, sex, approval of others, success, family? (they are not bad but very fragile)



WHAT'S PAUL'S SECRET?

- Paul's secret is that his joy depends on something that can't be taken or damaged: Christ!
- If Christ is the one who gives you the deepest joy, if Christ truly is your treasure then to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- But if we are honest we often say: 'to live is ... and to die is loss'
- How would your closest friend finish this sentence for you? 'For [fill in your name] to live is...'
- Rom. 8:35-39

