

In Christ

Philippians 1:12-26

What steals our joy? What steals your joy?

“Rejoice in the Lord **always**. I will say it again: Rejoice!” *Philippians 4:4*
Of course this **sometimes** makes sense. But now? Why? How?

Foundation: Jesus Christ is God the Son, who suffered to death for us
Philippians 1:2; 2:5-6; 2:10-11; 2:6-8

A brief history of Saul (Paul)

A life of great blessing

Born into a faithful Hebrew household

A Roman citizen by birth

Trained by Gamaliel, the premiere Pharisee of the day

He was “advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own people, so extremely zealous was I”

Authorized with troops from Jewish leadership to arrest Christians

When he became a Christian, that changed!

Repeatedly attacked and beaten and left for dead

Arrested in Jerusalem on false charges

Held unjustly for 2 years

Transferred to Rome as a prisoner, including a shipwreck

Held 2 years under house arrest in Rome

Able to stay in his own house that he rented

Perhaps moved to a stricter setting (“I am in chains...”)

Likely then wrote this letter to the Philippian church

Paul started the church and had a long good relationship with them

They supported Paul’s ministry with money and care and people

Even when in prison (put them at risk)

And who wants a suffering leader??

They were concerned about Paul in his years-long imprisonment

And perhaps especially with him being “in chains”

Philippians 1:12-26

12-14: The Gospel is flourishing while Paul is in chains

Paul rejoiced in the “advance the Gospel”

Like: “Your Kingdom come, your will be done...”

More people know the Good News

More people see and experience it in action

1) All the palace guard and beyond know of Christ

They heard and saw the life-altering reality of the Gospel in action

2) Christians proclaim the Gospel more

Confident, “dare all the more”, without fear

15-18a: The Gospel is flourishing even when some mean harm

The challenges were real!

Unjust (& certainly harsh) imprisonment continues

Christians were intentionally doing harm to Paul!

“Self-serving Christianity” = hypocrisy!

Paul believed in the power of the Gospel that was greater even than the voices who proclaimed it

Paul’s overriding concern: “in every way, Christ is preached”

And this brought joy!

18b-20: Paul rejoices in Christ, expecting sufficient courage

Repeated emphasis: Joy!

Key concern: "have sufficient courage" to keep focusing on Christ in joy & not ashamed to testify

It took real courage!

Through...

Their prayer

God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

Who was faithful through trial, suffering & death

21-26: ...whether in life or death

To live is Christ

Fruitful ministry to benefit those he loves

Joy and strength from the Spirit

Christ is his reason for being (and doing...)

To die is gain

Be directly with Christ

End of troubles

The Big Idea

**To live joyfully and fully today
is only found in Jesus Christ
and even more so when trouble and death come
"To live is Christ and to die is gain."**

Application

Live life "in Jesus Christ"

Paul's emphasis in Philippians: "in Christ"

Philippians 1:1, 13, 26, 14; 2:1, 5, 19, 24, 19, 24, 29; 3:1, 3, 14; 4:1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 19, 21

Because: Jesus Christ is God, He is life, He is the beginning and end, He is our peace

Christ is our reason for being

For us as individuals and for our church

This week brought many painful emotions for each of us

Anger / Sadness / Fear / Judgment / and more...

In our diverse church, we have a WIDE range of responses

We must continue caring for each other in our pain

Christ is our reason for being, not our politics!

Other things have value, yet only in their place in Christ

Spinning plates...

If you have Jesus Christ, you have everything in His hands!

He is the head who oversees everything else

He is before everything else

My "tribe": ethnicity, political party, social grouping, family, ... /

Justice: personal or societal / Country / My rights and freedoms

He brings peace to everything else

My identity, my pains, my regrets, my griefs

Living in conflicting worldviews and perspectives

While I am not threatened with prison, there are days when I have little eager expectation...

Why keep trying? Why hope for what can't come?

Through your prayers and the Spirit of Jesus, I am hopeful that I will have sufficient courage...

"To live is Christ"

He loves us by His grace

He is with us by His Spirit

He grants fruitful ministry for His Kingdom

“To die is gain”

Even when I give up what I deeply value, or I have it taken from me

Jesus’ gain in death: purchased salvation, followed by glory

Our gain in struggling for the Gospel: that somehow Christ would be known, followed by glory!

We will get the fulfillment of my deepest longings, forever growing

Rejoice in the advance of the Gospel

More people know the glory of our Savior!

So many live without the joy that is ours “in Christ”

A few imagine they can make it all work, yet a week like this week must certainly show how fragile that is

More people see and experience the Gospel in action

We see more clearly the brokenness of people and the impossibility of resolving our conflicts!

Oh, that people would see Jesus!

Not that they would see us, with our stumbling

But that they would see Jesus in us!

Oh, that we would have the aroma of Christ!

This is joy beyond words!!

“The important thing is that in every way,

whether from false motives or true,

Christ is preached. → **Made public and celebrated**

And because of this I rejoice.” *Philippians 1:18*

Our vision for our church in 2021

Jesus Christ is our reason for existence

Apart from Him we have nothing

With Him we have everything

Why do we keep loving across differences?

Because this is what Jesus called us to

Because this is what Jesus did

From a human perspective, this is possible

Yet in Christ, we can do nothing less

“For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Loving across differences takes great courage!

Please pray for me and for us

And let us walk in the Spirit of Jesus together

Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean for you today, in the midst of your fears and hope and anger and sadness and joys and sorrows, for this to be true: “To live is Christ”?
2. How are you participating in making Christ public and celebrated? How can you encourage people who are doing it? What steps might you take?
3. Where does the courage come from to love each other across our differences? What does it look like to love each other across these differences?
4. Will you join in prayer for our courage, that we will not be ashamed, even in trouble?

