



8/31/26

18 years ago this weekend, my husband preached here as a candidate to be the pastor of this church. 4 weeks later, we had moved here and he preached for the first time as the "senior pastor" for the 2nd anniversary of the church. Wow. I remember how convinced I was that the Lord was going to bring us here to serve. We waited for 6 months until the Lord opened the door. And now, as we get ready to celebrate the 20th anniversary of this church, I am still so grateful.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Philippians 1:22-30 ~

Maybe it's because Paul wrote so much of the New Testament and because he was the apostle that God gave to the Gentiles (of which I am one), but his example to me is the most compelling in understanding what it is to follow Christ both individually and as a church. He understood the hope of heaven and the treasure of relationship with Jesus in a way that I hope to fully grasp in my own relationship with the Lord. Being in prison for Jesus didn't deter Paul. Nothing made him question God's goodness. I want to be like that!

As I look at Philippians 1:22-30, I want to take in everything he said. I want to see where I am not living with his "for me to live is Christ and to die is gain" mindset, and I'm asking the Lord to change me so that my life follows his example as he follows Christ. What he writes in these verses is hard, but I believe... so worth it.

I think of the faith written about Moses in Hebrews 11:26 and how it would have to be said about Paul, too... and I hope one day, it could be said of my faith. It says, "He (Moses, and I could add... Paul) considered the reproach of Christ (the mistreatment of others because of his faith in Jesus) greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt (comfort and ease and the fleeting pleasures of sin), for he was looking to the reward (of spending eternity with Jesus)." Wow. That's incredible faith.

In several scriptures, Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ." Could I say that? If someone followed my example, would they look more like Jesus? O Lord, maybe in some ways... but there are a lot of ways I would be embarrassed for someone to look like me. Please change me. Let the treasure of being with You be my greatest treasure no matter the cost. You're so worth it.

Vs. 22-24 ~ "If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me." Paul's view of his life on earth was solely to serve Jesus and to be a light to others. In Acts 20:24 he said, "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." Whether he was in prison or going from place to place, his sole purpose was to carry out God's purpose for him. O Lord, what is my purpose? Is it to be fruitful for You? That starts with abiding in You. I can't have a purpose that costs my flesh so much unless I'm spending time with You and with Your word, walking by the Spirit, keeping my eyes fixed on You and not valuing comfort and ease. You're showing how much of comfort and ease I need to let go of in order to embrace a "fruitful labor" mindset. Do I treasure You enough for that? Please make it so!!!

Paul continued, "Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account." Sometimes we see the known of this world as having more value than the unknown of heaven. We fight to stay alive because we fear what we don't know.

Paul thought of wanting to go to heaven as being the more selfish thing to do. He knew that it would be far better to go and be with Jesus, but his ministry for Jesus was not yet done. The unselfish thing was to remain on earth, even if it meant being beaten, imprisoned, persecuted, and hated because there were still people who needed him to teach them the gospel.

Of course, he didn't actually get the choice between staying on earth or going to heaven, but he had that constant friction of longing for being in God's presence and loving the people who God still had for him to serve. He realized it was "more necessary" for these believers that he stay. It was more necessary on MY account! After writing the letter to the Philippians, he wrote Colossians, Philemon, Titus, and 1 and 2 Timothy. Those letters hold A LOT of value for me as I learn from them.

Father, You have a purpose for my life, too. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." You created me and ALL BELIEVERS with a purpose that goes far deeper than pursuing comfort and pleasure in this world. Does my purpose align with Your purpose? Please make it so! It's not Your purpose that needs to change if they don't align. It's mine. In anything I do, please help me to keep my eyes on You so that You can produce beautiful fruit from my service to You.

Vs. 25-26 ~ "Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your

progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again." Paul was sitting in prison with no set date for his release. He was confident that God would not only have him released from prison, but that he would be able to go back to Philippi to encourage these Kingdom Outpost church. Though we don't see it from the scriptures, some historians say that he did get the chance to go back. I know, though, that he held that loosely by what he said in vs. 27. I guess I'll get the chance to ask him about it someday when the Lord takes me home.

What I love and want to learn from about what Paul said here is that he didn't want to go back and see the church for his own glory. He wanted people to be able to grow in their faith in Jesus. He wanted them to have joy in Jesus. He wanted them to glory in Jesus. He viewed himself as an encourager of their faith, but not the center of their faith. To be in a place where so many people looked up to him the way they did, I would imagine Paul would have had to have incredible humility. It's so easy for someone who is often seen almost as a celebrity to get their eyes off Jesus and get stuck in the attention on themselves. Paul didn't have that heart.

O Lord, please help me to be so humble that I never drink in the poison of power. I have wanted honor from people more than I've wanted to honor You in my past. Let that not ever be my present or my future. Let my purpose be to point others to You... that they keep growing closer to You and grow in their faith with joy, that they seek to glory in You. Let that be me, too! Help me to keep growing closer to You in faith with joy. Let my sole desire be to glory in You and You alone.

Vs. 27-28 ~ "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God." What is a manner of life worthy of the gospel?

- It is not dependent on another person. Paul wanted to come see them again, but he knew that they needed Jesus far more than they needed him. If God were to take him home, he knew that God would provide what they needed to continue with Him. Please help me not to think too much of myself that I would think people need me more than You... and please help me to trust You so completely that I appreciate the people You put in my life to teach me about You, but I don't put more hope in them than I put in You.*
- No man is an island. To have a manner of life that is worthy of the gospel is to think US, not ME. It's to "stand firm in ONE spirit." Together as a church, we don't let anything shake our spirits. We together stand on God's word and refuse to veer off of it. We love one another and together seek to glorify Jesus and the Father.*
- With one unified mind we "strive together for the faith of the gospel." We are unified. We strive side by side because living the gospel in a broken world is hard. We need each other's support and encouragement. We live by faith. We pursue a deeper confidence and trust in the Lord and in His word. O Lord, let that be my heart!!! Let that be the*

manner of life that we as Your Kingdom Outpost, Summit Point Church, pursue... from the top down and the bottom up.

- *A manner of life worthy of the gospel in Christ does not fear those who oppose our stand of faith in Christ. We WILL have opposition. I was listening to a podcast, and the pastor pointed out that the pattern of the book of Acts is... miracle of lives turned to Jesus → opposition and persecution from the enemy → miracle of lives turned to Jesus → opposition and persecution from the enemy. The enemy tries to infiltrate the church and make us fear opposition more than we honor and worship the Lord. The only way we can stand against him and not be deceived is by standing firm in the Lord according to His word. The devil is a master manipulator. He will even try to twist the word of God to deceive us. O Lord, please help us to keep our eyes on You. Your word says that discernment (to be able to not be drawn in by deception) comes in applying Your word to our lives... not just hearing it, but living it!*

As we live a manner of life worthy of the gospel of Christ, we live without fear. We live with confidence in the freedom we have in Christ, even while the opposition tries to frighten us. When people see that they can't stop us, they will either recognize the truth and turn to Jesus, or they will die without Him. That's the greater tragedy, not me facing opposition. When we stand firm in the Lord, we have a greater confidence in our salvation. We never lose salvation, but sometimes we lose confidence. But our salvation is from the Lord. We didn't earn it and we can't lose it. O Lord, let that be our confidence! One of the most repeated commands in scripture for believers, if not THE most, is "Do not be afraid." The Lord is with us. We have nothing to fear.

Vs. 29-30 ~ And now comes the statement from Paul that many want to ignore and some even teach against... "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also SUFFER for His sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have."

I like the part about believing in Him. Believing in Him means that I get to spend eternity with Him. But suffering for His sake? It's been GRANTED to me? Oh my goodness! The Greek word translated to "granted" is "charis"! It is the same word that is often interpreted "grace." It is by grace I believe in God, and it is by grace I suffer for God. God grants me the privilege of suffering, of enduring, for the sake of knowing Jesus.

Why is suffering concerning my relationship with Jesus a grace of God? Romans 5:3-5 tells me that by my suffering I grow in endurance, and by my endurance I grow in the character of Jesus, and by my character, I grow in hope as God, through the Holy Spirit, pours His love into my heart. 1 Peter 1:6-7 says that my suffering proves out the genuineness of my faith and it results in praise, honor, and glory from the Lord as He says to me, "Well done, sweet girl!" James 1:2-4 tells me to consider my suffering as joy because through it I become mature in Christ. Through suffering, I learn how to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel. Through the word, I learn how worthy the gospel is. Through the Spirit, I receive strength for both. O

Lord, help me to see my suffering as a privilege and not a punishment!!!

If I am to be a part of a Kingdom Outpost church, I will not only acknowledge the suffering that Paul went through, but I'll be both willing and expecting to experience the same suffering that he did. This is only possible when I humble myself before God in gratitude for what He's done for me... with my eyes set on eternity and not on the temporary comforts of this world. This is a Hebrews 11:26 faith, to consider suffering for Jesus a greater treasure than any treasure this world has to offer, because no earthly reward can even come close to matching the reward of spending eternity with the Lord.

O Lord, this is a massive call... a massive shift in thinking. Holy Spirit, please transform me by the renewal of my mind so that I think like You think, like Paul thought, like a faithful, genuine Kingdom Outpost church thinks. Father, I have treasured comfort and ease. They don't deliver contentment. You do. Help me to treasure You. And when I struggle because things are hard and uncomfortable, help me to run to You. You are my refuge and strength, my grace, my treasure.