

2016: Week 39

Sunday, September 25th 2016

"Rising Above Your Circumstances"

Philippians 1:12

¹² Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel...

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (NASB).

On Sunday John continued preaching from our sermon series within the Book of Philippians. This week we encounter a remarkable passage that provides a glimpse into Paul's big-picture view of life. This probably doesn't surprise you, but Paul's life mission and purpose could not be any more different than that of our culture. We live in a society that tells us, *"this life is all there is, so above all else, just be happy."* If this life is all there is and the goal of life is to just be happy, then our satisfaction in life and our purpose of living is entirely dependent on our circumstances. Circumstances change. God doesn't. As you study Philippians, may you be encouraged to know the Lord has a purpose for *you right where you are*, and He expects you to find your strength and purpose in Him, not your circumstances.

1. READ Philippians 1:12–18

- What were the present circumstances Paul was experiencing at the time of his writing? (see **vs.12–14**)
- How could Paul claim that his imprisonment was actually a good thing, in fact a "progress of the gospel"?
- Have you ever seen good come out of bad circumstances? If so, how?
- In **vs.15–18** Paul describes how certain individuals proclaimed Christ for the wrong reasons, specifically for some kind of gain that they received from ministry (whether it be prestige, wealth, influence, etc.). Although undoubtedly frustrating to observe, Paul saw good come out of such ministry– "Only that in every way, whether in pretense or truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I **rejoice...**" (**v.18**).

What allowed Paul to "rejoice" even amidst such frustrations?

2. READ Philippians 1:19–26

- In **v. 21** Paul utters one of the most well-known lines from Scripture: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

What does Paul mean by this verse?

Do you have a similar perspective of life (and death) that would allow you to say the same words?

- In **v. 23** Paul states his desire is "to depart and be with Christ." The grammatical construction within this line demands simultaneous action. Simply stated, as soon as the believer dies ("departs"), he or she is immediately "with Christ." This is a similar idea to that we find in **2 Corinthians 5:8** which states, "we are of good courage, I say, and prefer to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." There is no holding zone for the believer after death. If you have trusted in the finished work of Jesus Christ your Savior, you can be assured you will be with Jesus *immediately* after you die. Praise the Lord!

3. READ Philippians 1:27–30

- On Sunday John translated Paul's phrase "conduct yourselves" from **v.27** as "live like an appropriate citizen." Scripture reminds us that our citizenship is in heaven, and so we are called to be witnesses for God and His Gospel while living in an earth that is not our home.

Does your life right now reflect that you are a citizen of heaven? If not, what should change?

- In **v.29** Paul reminds the Philippian believers that it was out of God's grace He had "granted" them the privilege of not only to believe in Christ but to suffer for Christ. Wow!

How might suffering for Christ be gift from God?

FAMILY PRAYER: Thank the Lord for your salvation in Christ. Ask Him for wisdom to see beyond your circumstances. Ask Him for the strength and courage to suffer well for Him. May He realign your focus, so that you find deep satisfaction in obeying Him and even suffering for Him rather than in your fluctuating circumstances.