

Paul's purpose in writing to the Church at Philippi is to insist that, despite troubles, conflicts, persecutions & sufferings, there is still ***Joy in the Journey with Jesus!*** As we study thru Paul's Philippian letter, I want to find & focus on each chapter's theme – *related to Joy* – so that, by the time we're finished, we'll have a working knowledge of the book itself – and, along the way, we'll have captured, by memory, some verses from each chapter

You can tell, simply by the title of the message this AM, what many believe to be the most pressing truth in this part of the letter. Mind you, it's not the only important truth, and if you were preaching you might well choose a different verse/theme. Choosing themes is not an exact science, often based more in our own pressing issues or spiritual needs than in the author's purpose. Nevertheless, this morning we'll be thinking deeply about Paul's phrase: ***“to live IS Christ, & to die is gain!”***

But first, let's get some context!

READ: Phil 1:4-11; 14; 27-29 – *brief comments along the way*

Paul's overarching theme – Joy in the Journey – is clearly felt & read in his writing. And this joy is not in the absence of suffering, hardships or persecution... ***but in spite of them!*** In fact, Paul comes to the conclusion that the only thing more joyful than living with Christ here is to be eternally with Him there!

READ: Phil 1:20-26

22-26 This is confidence in Christ: Because ongoing ministry to the Christians in Philippi is necessary & **will be fruitful**, Paul knows that he will not “get what he wants” – release thru death into Christ's presence – finished! Though he doesn't say it, I believe Paul has a word from God, ***“knowing it's better for you, I am convinced that I will remain!”*** Though not palatable for Paul, this is the source of his confidence that release from prison and further ministry is what God has planned for him.

“To live is Christ” then doesn't mean that in living life we become Christ or simply that we live *like* Christ would *if He were here*; but that the life we live thru union with Him is... ***His***

life! (Gal 2:20) To live IS Christ means that living on earth as His child & His vessel allows Him to carry out His ministry, mission and work in/thru our bodies, souls and spirit's. To live IS Christ means that, as we experience Him ourselves & express Him to others, they realize that they're encountering Him in us!

“To live IS Christ” identifies our symbiotic relationship with God: 2 distinctly different beings joined in a mutually beneficial union (like clown fish & sea anemone, lichen & rocks, bees & flowers). The benefit for us is obvious: we're re-created to be the much-loved children of God. ***But what's in this union for Jesus?*** There are 3 benefits worthy of consideration!

1) HIS KINGDOM IS MANIFEST THRU US

- His Church (believers) carry on His earthly ministry by His power thru His Spirit in us.
- Christ's ministry is salvation for mankind. We share Him & His message so that others may come in faith
- He uses our minds & mouths to connect people's need with His salvation as Savior!

2) HIS KINGDOM AUTHORITY IS IN US

- Jesus is humbling His enemies until He returns...& He's using us to demonstrate His power/authority on earth
- He has “made us (*already*) more than conquerors!” (Rom 8)
- He “always leads us in His triumph in Christ” (2Cor 7)

3) HIS KINGDOM INHERITANCE IS FOR US!

- “the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18)
- “For the joy set before Him...” (Heb 12:3,4)
- “so Jesus could bring many sons to glory!” (Rom 8)

INVITATION:

- 1) Is Jesus a source of JOY to/for/in you?
- 2) Do trials & sufferings enhance your relationship with Jesus?
- 3) Does JOY label you as one of His?

MEDITATION: Joy – James 1:2-4 (NAS)

“Consider it all joy, my brethren....”

“...when you encounter various trials/troubles, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing!”

Joy from trouble? Joy thru endurance? I thought joy came with convenience, ease & relaxation! I thought joy was an element of vacations - not trials, troubles and turmoils! *We must remember: the Kingdom of God is the world’s way of living...upside down!*

Joy – *the deep-seated sense of contentment & fulfillment* – comes from God, not circumstances. Joy stems from knowing that God created you to be loved by Him, that you are not alone, that He is with you, for you, & in you – that He is facing what you face with confidence not confusion, with joy not anxiety or insecurity. After all... ***“The Joy of the Lord is your strength!”***

Today, we start a new sermon series in Philippians; and I’ll give you one guess as to the theme of this letter

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: Joy in the Journey!

Philippians 1:4-11, 14 (NLT)

4) Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, 5) for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. 6) And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. 7) So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. 8) God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. 9) I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. 10) For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ’s return. 11) May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God. 14) And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God’s message without fear.

27) Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. 28) Don’t be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. 29) For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.

Philippians 1:20-25 (NLT)

20) For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. 21) For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. 22) But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don’t know which is better. 23) I’m torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. 24) But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live. 25) Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith!