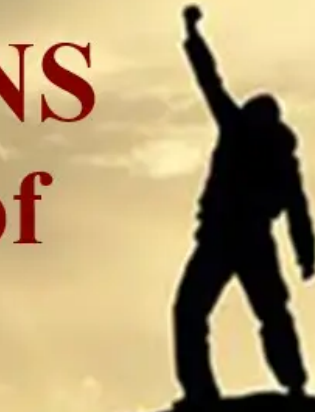


PHILIPPIANS

The Epistle of

Joy



Old Testament Reading – Psalm 139:1-24

New Testament Reading – Ephesians 3:8-21

The Epistle of Joy

“In Life or In Death”

Philippians 1:21-26

Wayne J. Edwards, Pastor

Just as the Apostle Paul's dramatic conversion experience was the evidence of his salvation, and his three-year separation from society to be discipled by Jesus was the evidence of his sanctification, his humility in earning his acceptance with the other apostles was the evidence of his true dedication to Christ.

- **As an Apostle**, Paul made a dramatic impact on the whole world. He traveled thousands of miles by sea, and over 10,000 miles by foot to take the gospel to more than 50 territories outside of the Jewish communities in Israel.
- **As an Evangelist**, Paul defined the essential elements of the gospel, that salvation was by God's grace alone, through the believer's faith alone, and in Christ alone.
- **As a theologian**, Paul codified the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith, including the seven dispensations of time, the silent rapture of the Church, and the seven years of Tribulation before the return of Jesus Christ.

However, while he was under “house arrest” in Rome, in A.D. 60-62, that the Apostle Paul made this astounding statement: ***“For to me, to live in Christ, and to die is gain.”***

- Paul made that statement in the context of the full surrender of his life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ – just as Paul had put his trust in Jesus Christ for the assurance of his eternal life, so he could trust Him with every day of his life. Therefore, whether he lived or died, his life would bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31, ***“Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”***

1. Paul’s Purpose in Life – Romans 15:6 – “That I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

- In Philippians 3:5-6, Paul described himself as a ***“Hebrew of Hebrews,” belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised on the eighth day, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, and as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”***
- Paul’s surname was Saul. His parents were Jewish nationalists who adhered to every jot and title of the Law of Moses. When he turned 13, Saul was sent to Judea to learn from the great rabbi Gamaliel, under whom he mastered Jewish history, the Psalms, and the Prophets.
- Saul believed God had called the Jewish nation to be a “light unto the Gentiles” and he was so zealous for Judaism that he persecuted those who believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the God-sent Messiah.
- In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul said it was “unthinkable” among the higher echelon of the Jews that the God-promised Messiah would ever allow Himself to be so humiliated as Jesus was.
- Paul began his life with a sincere but inaccurate devotion to God. While he thought he was glorifying God by his zealous protection of Judaism, he was, in fact, glorifying himself, his ancestry, his academic pedigree, and his position of power and prestige in the Sanhedrin.

2. Paul’s Progress in Life – Philippians 4:11-13 – “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

- When Saul started down that road to Damascus, he had no idea that by the end of the day, he would be converted from a man who had dedicated his life to protecting Judaism by persecuting Jesus and those who believed in Him to a man who would give his life for the proclamation of Jesus as the very Son of God.
- After being discipled by the Lord Jesus, Paul began preaching the gospel in Jerusalem. Then God inspired him to take the gospel to Greece, Turkey, Syria, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica, and finally to Rome.
- Paul was the first man:
 - To connect the prophecies of the Old Testament to their fulfillment in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - To describe how God imputes the righteousness of Christ into the lives of those who believe in Him and

receive Him as their Savior and Lord.

- To define such terms as regeneration, salvation justification, sanctification, and glorification.
 - To declare that God's gift of salvation was by His grace alone, through the believer's faith alone, in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.
 - To define the believer's spiritual warfare, and to outline the end time events in accordance with what Jesus had taught about His return to establish His kingdom upon the earth.
- However, none of these accomplishments were achieved without a lot of resistance from the Jews, which caused Paul much personal pain and suffering
- In every city, the Jewish Religious leaders opposed him, and they plotted as to how they could kill him.
 - They employed mobs to beat him, whip him, stone him, and run him out of town.
 - Paul was forsaken by his friends and abandoned by many of those he had led to Christ – he said ***“Only Timothy”*** truly understood his heart.
 - Many of the churches Paul had started had strayed from the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, and their members were involved in gross immorality.
 - Paul was in tears over the lostness of his own Jewish relatives.
 - Paul endured the hostility of the ungodly world, the anger of the Jewish Religious Leaders, and the heartbreaking rejection of many of those to whom he had ministered.
 - Paul ended up in prison four times, and was under house arrest while writing this letter.
- However, in spite of it all, Paul never lost his joy.
- 2 Corinthians 6:10 – ***“Sorrowing yet always rejoicing.”***
 - Philippians 1:18 – ***“In this I rejoice! Yes, and I will rejoice.”***

3. Paul's Preference in Life – Philippians 1:21-23 – *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose, I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”*

- The term “hard-pressed” meant that Paul longed to be gone from this world, not because of his life circumstances, but because he wanted to be with the Lord Jesus.
- Paul said, whether he lived or died was not up to him but up to Christ, for he had no fear of death at all.
- Paul had so surrendered his life unto the Lordship of Christ that it was as though he no longer lived, but Christ lived His life through Paul.
- Paul said, just as the Lord had been with him for the last 30 years, he wanted to be with the Lord for the rest of eternity.
- Philippians 3:7-8 – ***“What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all***

things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ."