

Christ Exalted

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 February 2007

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Philippians chapter 1 beginning in verse 12. Now I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

! As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this, I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice.

[1:05] For I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now, as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know.

I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you, again, your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

Once in a while, a box will come to our door with these words stamped upon it. Fragile, handle with care.

Would that message be stamped upon your joy? Is your joy fragile? What does it take to break it, to lose it?

[2:31] A change for the worse in your circumstances? Everything from the weather, to how your sport team did, to your health, your finances, your family life, your freedoms, your free time, your comforts.

What we find in this little letter to the Philippians is the Apostle Paul locked up in a Roman prison, awaiting trial and sentencing from Nero the Emperor.

And this week we learn that the issues are serious. If the charges against him stick, it could be execution. It could be martyrdom for the sake of Christ.

And yet in this letter, we find that the Apostle is rejoicing. He's not down in the dumps, but he's overflowing with joy. And we ask, why? Why is that?

Well, because the Gospel has been advanced precisely through his imprisonment. There are people hearing the Gospel that wouldn't have heard it, like the palace guard and others throughout Rome.

[3:42] And besides that, most of the Christians have grown more bold in their witness to tell others of Christ. And all because Paul is in prison. And so he's rejoicing.

Oh, but Paul, you know that some who are preaching Christ are doing so out of envy and rivalry. Trying to stir up trouble for you. What does it matter, he says?

The important thing is that Christ is being preached. And therein I rejoice. And at once we see that he has the wagon of his joy hitched to a whole different horse than the one that our joy wagon is often hitched to.

His joy is hitched to Christ. And the advancement of his Gospel, ours, is often hitched to ourselves. And our own circumstances going well for us.

No wonder our joy is so fragile and fleeting. No wonder his joy is so stable and enduring. Even in the midst of prison and personal mistreatment.

[4:52] His joy not only survives, but it actually thrives and grows. Now here today in verse 18, we learn that Paul's joy was not only present, but it's also future.

Because of this, I rejoice, he says. Right now, I'm rejoicing because of this. That's present. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice.

I'm going to go on rejoicing in the future. Joy for today and joy for all my tomorrows. What a glorious prospect for this prisoner of Rome.

And we ask, how can you be so sure, Paul, that you will rejoice in the future? That tomorrow you'll have this joy. And the next day and every day of your life.

How do you know that your joy won't fizzle out? I mean, you don't even know whether your trial is going to end in your life or your death.

[5:52] How can you be so sure about this joy? Well, he tells us in our text today, I will continue to rejoice because I know that whatever happens, Christ will be exalted in my body.

I know that Christ will be exalted in my body. There's the horse to which he has his cart of joy hitched again. Now, just what exactly does he mean when he says Christ will be exalted in my body?

Verse 20. The word therefore exalted in the Greek is mega luno. And I bring that out because you can hear the word mega in that, can't you?

And kids, you know what mega means. Mega means large. Mega means great. And I like the King James Version translation here better than the NIV.

It talks about Christ being magnified in my body. Because it brings out the mega more, I think, than exalted.

[6:58] That Christ will be magnified. What does a magnifying glass do, kids? It makes the object look what? Large. Great.

Precisely. And that's what Paul's saying is that Christ will be magnified in my body. And that's why I rejoice. A young boy went with his father to hear the evangelist George Whitefield.

I believe it was when he was in Boston. They went to hear him preach. And when he came back, he announced to his family. And he was all excited. And they asked him about Whitefield's preaching.

And he simply said, he made God look big.

Made God look big. He magnified God. Now, God is big. And in his preaching, he showed that to his audience.

That God is big. My God is so big. That was the message that day. And you know, you can do the same. You can do the same even though you're not a preacher.

[8:01] You can do the same in whatever calling of life you are. It is by a holy life that you magnify your God. By the things that you say, you can make Jesus Christ look large and big.

By the things you do. By loving God. And trusting him. And rejoicing in him. You can make your God look large to the world.

And by loving people. And serving them for Jesus' sake. You magnify God. And make others think more highly of him.

He will be exalted. Lifted up in my body. Be thought more highly of. And so the question that comes to us is, do people who meet you and know you think large thoughts of God because of you?

Do they come away from you thinking elevated thoughts of Jesus? Because that's who this person is serving. What a God he must have.

[9:04] What a Savior she must serve. Well, that was Paul's passion, wasn't it? That God would be exalted in his body. It's just one of the variations on the theme that we've seen of glorifying God.

That's Paul's passion in life. That Christ. That the gospel be advanced. That Christ be preached. Now we see it again in this opening chapter.

That Christ be exalted. Exalted. All really just different variations of God being glorified. And that's what made life worth living for the apostle.

And he says, if that happens. If Christ is exalted. Christ is made known. Then whatever happens to me. I will be a happy man.

And I will go on rejoicing. I'm rejoicing now. And I will rejoice in the future. Am I put down? What does it matter if he is lifted up? Exalted. Am I belittled and made small?

[10:03] Well, what does it matter if he is magnified and made large? But Paul, you might not even live. Again, he would say, what does it matter?

The important thing is that Christ will be magnified. Whether by life or by death. So that if I live, Christ will be exalted in me.

In a life of service to him. And if I die, Christ will be exalted and magnified by my death. And people will say, what a God he must serve.

That would actually make death welcome to him. What a savior he must have. That he would be willing to die for him. And so by his death, he would seal his testimony of the gospel in blood.

And the gospel would be advanced. This is great, Paul says. It's a win-win situation. Whether I die or whether I live. Christ is going to be exalted. And therefore, I will go on rejoicing.

[11:09] We are the happiest when we are forgetful about ourselves. And are magnifying the Lord Jesus Christ. That's when we're the happiest. Christ being exalted.

Christ. Christ. The great Lord Jesus. And him being lifted up. Is something big enough to lose ourselves in. It's big enough to hold our interest.

And to keep us preoccupied. And keep us forgetful of ourselves. You know, the problem with most people is they have no passion in life bigger than themselves. They're very passionate about themselves.

And what a trifling, puny little endeavor that is. That my life revolves around. Little me, me, me. No wonder people are bored. No wonder people have no purpose in life.

No wonder people wake up in the morning and say, What's the use? No wonder people are ending their lives. We weren't made to revolve around little me.

[12:07] We were made to serve this great God in Jesus Christ. What a privilege to be a Christian. And to magnify the Son of God.

We are invited by Christ to lose ourselves in something much bigger than ourselves. Even exalting the Lord Jesus. And only then do we truly find ourselves.

And only then do we sense that this is what I was made for. So that's what Paul says to us in this portion of God's Word.

This portion of his letter. Notice in verse 19 that Paul is convinced that his imprisonment will turn out for his deliverance. The word means salvation or deliverance. Notice, he says, Yes, and I will continue to rejoice for.

Here's the reason. I'll go on rejoicing. I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me, my prisonment, my trial, will turn out or result for my deliverance.

[13:12] Now, he's not talking here about his deliverance from death. He's not saying, I know that in the end I'm going to be delivered from death. The very next verse he says that, I know this, Christ will be exalted, whether by life or by death.

I don't know yet what the emperor's decision will be. I know whatever it is, Christ will be exalted. So he's not talking here so much about deliverance from physical problems and prison and death.

But he's talking about something, about being saved from something far worse than death by execution. And it's to be delivered from disgracing his master before Nero's court.

He's going to stand trial for the gospel. And it's no small thing to be faithful unto death, to be faithful to Jesus when that could mean your head rolling.

No small thing then to stand up with courage and not to deny the Savior. And so this is the deliverance he's referring to.

[14:28] To be saved from being ashamed of Jesus. To be saved from denying Christ out of cowardice and fear. Wanting to save his own neck. And this deliverance is spelled out in the very next verse.

Verse 20. And we notice again the intensity of his confidence. He said in verse 19, I know, I know that this will turn out for my deliverance. And now he says, I eagerly expect and hope.

This is something Paul is expecting to happen. Just as you're expecting to see the sun rise tomorrow morning. He was expecting this deliverance. That I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage.

That is at my trial. My upcoming trial. I'll have sufficient boldness to stand and to make known the mystery of the gospel. So that now, as always, Christ will be exalted in my body. Whether by life or by death. Whether I'm released or whether I'm executed. Whatever the outcome of the trial is for me. I fully expect for Christ to be exalted in my body.

[15 : 31] For him to be made much of. And that's all that matters. Not whether I live, but whether he's magnified. And that's just what happened. We believe that 2 Timothy chapter 4 is referring to this first imprisonment and trial.

When he says, At my first defense. He's now an old man ready to die. He's going to stand trial again. And this time it will be the sword. And his last words to us are given there in 2 Timothy 4. And he says, At my first defense. No one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held to there against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the mouth of the lion. It turned out just as Paul was expecting. That indeed, grace was given. Boldness. Sufficient courage.

To make known Christ and his gospel. But we ask, how did Paul know that ahead of time? How could he be so sure of himself? How does he know that he'll have sufficient courage and he won't be ashamed of Christ?

[16 : 42] I know it, he says. I eagerly expect and hope. He's clearly counting on it. How can he be so certain? Well, we know it had nothing to do with the strength of his own dedication and determination.

That can wither up like a fallen leaf. That can pass away like the early morning fog. That wasn't what gave him this certainty. Why is Paul certain that he'll have sufficient courage to not be ashamed of Christ on his trial?

Well, he gives two reasons. Notice them in verse 19. For I know that through your prayers, there's one, and the help given by the Holy Spirit, by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, there's number two. I'm counting on having sufficient courage because of your prayers and the help given by the Holy Spirit. Now, let's notice this. It takes the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ to make anyone a bold witness of Christ.

We sometimes wrongly think that guys like Peter and John and Paul, these guys had no trouble with being bold for the Gospel. Absolutely wrong thought.

[17 : 53] All we have to do is go back and remember Peter in the high priest's courtyard when the pressure's on. It's just a little maid. You're one of them. You were with them.

And he denies it flat out three times with curses. And we see this boldness for the Gospel is not something that just comes natural to man.

No, this boldness is the fruit of the Spirit. It's by the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ that I know I'll have sufficient courage. In the book of Acts, we see, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly.

There it is again. It's when we have the power of the Spirit that we are enabled to boldly speak of Christ.

But left to ourselves, we will be ashamed. We'll not stand up and speak like we ought the next opportunity you have at school, at work, at the neighborhood. You will not speak. You'll be frozen with fear and fear of man issues if left to yourself.

[19 : 07] Do you realize that the same thing would have happened to the Apostle Paul if left to himself? Sometimes we think he's a different breed of cat. He's not. He's one of us. And he had fear of man issues just as much as we do.

He's not confident he'll have sufficient courage just because of his temperament, just because of his makeup. Not at all. He's confident because he knows the help of the Spirit will assist him.

He'll have the supply, the help of the Spirit. And notice, secondly from this, that the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is fetched by prayer.

How does this help of the Spirit come to the Apostle? Verse 19, For I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ that this deliverance from shame will come. Don't miss the connection between their prayers and the help of the Holy Spirit of Jesus. You see it there? Verse 19, Through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus.

[20 : 12] What a statement on the effectiveness of intercessory prayer. Now sometimes we wonder, don't we, whether prayer really changes anything after all.

I mean, if everything in the world is predestined by God as the Scriptures teach, then why pray? Why pray? Will it really make a difference?

And doubt set in and prayerlessness defines us or we pray with little expectation. We need to get our theology of prayer in line with the holy apostles.

And according to the apostle Paul, he can say, I am confident that deliverance will come. I am sure, I am expecting to see grace arrive at my door to give me sufficient courage to not be ashamed of Christ precisely because you are praying for me.

And your prayers will secure the help of the Holy Spirit that I need to have sufficient courage to magnify Christ in my trial, whether it be by life or by death.

[21 : 22] Paphroditus had come from Philippi and had told Paul, no doubt, the saints are praying for you, Paul. They know you're in prison, they're praying. And here's the theology of Paul on prayer.

800 miles away, over here in Philippi, some saints are calling on the throne of grace. And in heaven, God is hearing the cries of his church and sends a supply of the Spirit of God 800 miles to a Roman cell and infuses it into the apostle Paul so that in the midst of his trial and all that's going on, he's not ashamed of Christ.

He speaks up with boldness and Christ is magnified through him even in his imprisonment.

According to the apostle Paul, prayer changes things.

According to the apostle Paul, it was their prayers that made the difference between him being ashamed and him having sufficient courage to not be ashamed. No wonder his letters are peppered with the request, and pray for me also.

He knew the power of prayer. Pray also for me that whenever I open my mouth, words might be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains.

[22 : 42] Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should. Now, is that your view of prayer? Is it seen in your practice of prayer that you seek the help of the Holy Spirit for others?

and you believe that when you pray, heaven responds and sends the help of the Spirit to the people you pray for? Do you value above all things the prayers of the saints?

Do you ever come to your brother and sister and say, pray for me, brother? Pray for me. I've got opportunities at work to witness to this fellow, but I am scared. Do you ever get that honest with each other and say, pray that I'll have sufficient boldness?

That's what the apostle needed. That's what he confesses openly. But he's confident that if they're praying, the help of the Spirit will be given. And that's why Paul's rejoicing.

And that's why he says, I will rejoice in the future because I know help is on the way to keep me magnifying Christ. And that, whether by life or whether by death.

[23 : 51] Now, we're shifting gears. And we're looking at a man who says, I'm rejoicing because Christ will be magnified whether by life or by death.

If we want to understand the holy indifference of the apostle to life or death, to whether he lives or whether he dies, we've got to know something about his view on life and death.

And so that's what he gives us next. It's a very personal word of testimony, verse 21. For to me, whatever life and death is to you, let me tell you what it is to me.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Now, if you understand that, you'll understand why he has this indifference to life or death, whichever it be. If you don't understand that, you'll not understand how Paul can be so indifferent to whether he lives or he dies.

Give me one word to define your life. One word. Boil it all down. What's the main thing with you? What's your great interest in life?

[24 : 59] Your business? Your pursuit? Whatever it is that grabs you and turns you on. What is the one thing about you? You know what some people would say? If they're honest, this morning they'd say money and the things money buys.

Fame, popularity, power, ease, recreation, sport. One word that defines your life.

Could you do it in one word? The Apostle Paul could. For to me, life is Christ. Christ. It's all about Christ.

It's knowing Him. It's trusting Him. It's obeying Him. It's worshiping Him. It's listening to Him as He speaks in His Word. It's talking to Him.

It's talking about Him. It's magnifying Him. Life for me is Christ. Christ defined His life. Apart from Christ, you could not understand the life of Paul.

[26:02] What's up with this guy? He doesn't care whether he lives or... You must know that Christ was His life. He defined His life.

Christ gave meaning and purpose and significance to everything in His life. There was nothing in Paul's life that was detached from the center. If this is the center of Paul's life, it had its strings into everything that Paul did.

Whatever he did, he did for Christ. Christ. So life for Paul was Christ. It's the only life worthy of the name and it's all bound up in Jesus Christ.

And because of that, he can go on to describe death in one word. To me, to die is gain.

Now, is that the word that you would choose? Just choose one word to describe your death. To die is gain. The only reason Paul can say that is because to him to live is Christ.

[27:09] His life is Christ. Therefore, to die is gain. Why? Because death would bring him into the immediate presence of Christ who is His life.

Who's the center of everything for Him. What a Savior is Jesus that He should make death gain for His people. What a Savior He is to take what is the last enemy death and to turn it into a friend for His children.

Gain. We're going to see it's even better than gain. It's much more better, He'll tell us later. But all you must notice that death is only gain to those whose life is Christ.

If Christ is not your life, then death would not be gain for you. It would be a great loss for you. It would be eternal loss. You see, if Christ isn't your life, then death is a loss because it's the end of everything that you do live for.

All that you've lived for. When you die, it's over. You've received all of your good things in this life, the Bible says. It's the end of all your good things, of all the mercies of God, of all of His kindnesses.

[28:22] death would not be a gain to you if you're outside of Christ. It will be eternal loss to you. If Christ is not yours, you're not prepared to die.

And if you're not prepared to die, you're not prepared to live. The only life worth living and the only death worth dying is in Christ.

So how about you? What is life to you? Is it Christ or is it self? And some variation on the theme of self. For me to live is Christ, Paul says. What is death to you?

Is it gain or is it loss in your estimation? And dear believers, is this not a searching word to our hearts? Could it be said in truth that Christ is so much at the center of my life that if you would take one word to describe my life, it would be Christ.

It's Christ in the morning. It's Christ in the noontime. It's Christ in the afternoon hours. It's Christ in the evening. It's Christ at midnight. It's Christ the center of my least endeavors.

[29:36] Christ the best thought by day or by night. Christ my most treasured conversation. Christ His praise your highest aim.

His smile your chief delight. You see, if our living was more wrapped up in Christ then we would say more boldly with Paul to me to die is gain.

For it would bring us to him who is our life. Now, Paul has a dilemma at this point and we already begin to see it. He's been talking and thinking about these two possibilities facing him.

Whether he's going to go on living or whether it's going to be the executioner's sword and he's going to die. And he's quite undecided as he's thinking about them. Which one would I prefer?

Each have much to be said for them. On the one hand, if I'm going to go on living in the body, verse 22, well then this will mean fruitful! fruitful labor for me. If I'm acquitted at my trial and allowed to live, I'll be able to go on laboring for Christ, go on magnifying his name, advancing his gospel, preaching Christ, fruitful labor.

[30:42] He expects his labor to be fruitful because he knows that God does not allow his word to go out and to return to him without bringing forth the fruit for which he sent it. And so if I live, I get to go on magnifying Christ through fruitful labor.

Wonderful! I'm ready to choose life! I'm ready to choose go on living! living! But when I consider the other alternative, I get all confused again.

What shall I choose? I do not know. Well, it really isn't his choice, is it? But if it were, he doesn't know which to prefer, which to choose.

He says, I'm torn between two. It's like you've got two people hanging on to each arm and they're pulling you apart. I'm in a straight betwixt two.

I'm hemmed in by two positives. It's not that there's a positive and a negative. It would be easy. But I've got these two positives and they're squeezing me.

[31 : 46] One commentator compared it to a cattle squeeze. Some of you farmers will know that there are these things that you get the cattle in and they hold the thing in place so that you can administer the medicine. There's pressure on the right, there's pressure on the left, and Paul says, when I think about dying, I feel the pressure.

That'd be a good choice. But I'm also feeling the pressure of life would be good too. What shall I choose? I don't know. You ever feel that pressure?

From two sides? Not just from one? For the apostle, it was a win-win situation. On the one hand, I desire to depart and to be with Christ.

And we ask, what could make death such a welcome prospect for the apostle? Well, he tells me, to depart would be to be with Christ. To be with Christ.

Folks, there's no purgatory that you go to after death. You depart this life and you wake up with Christ immediately. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

[32 : 58] There is no sleep of the soul. There's no unconsciousness of where we're at until the final resurrection. No, the apostle says, I desire to depart. It's a word that could be used of a ship setting off from its moorings, or it's a word that could be used of breaking camp, pulling up the stakes.

And when I pull up stakes here, I will be with Christ there. Just like that. Now you can understand a little better why Paul is saying, I'm in a twist here.

I don't know what to choose. To be with Christ. Do you ever think about that? What will that first meeting be?

To look on Him. To look on the face that bore the crowns for you. The crown of thorns. to look on Him that you have read of all your life in the scriptures.

Now to see Him. To look on Him that you have been talking to every day, morning, noon, and night. Now here He is. Paul says, I'm ready to depart.

[34 : 10] I'd prefer to depart and to be with Christ, which is better by far. It's a triple comparative. It's not just saying it's better or that it's much better, but it's much more better.

He's heaping up words to show just how much better it would be to be at home with Christ than to be absent. Better to be feasting with Christ there than fighting for Christ here.

Better to be with Christ than to preach Christ even. Better to reign with Him in Heaven than to suffer for Him on Earth. Better to be like Him perfectly there than to go on sinning against Him here.

And yet well Paul says that would be better by far.

Do you know any better by far as you think of your death? And it's not that Heaven would be better by far than Hell. Please let's everybody would say that.

[35 : 14] That's not what he's saying here. He's saying Heaven would be better by far than going on living here. And that's something that the sinner can't say. The sinner loves his life here because life is about himself.

It is not about Christ. And so to go to be with Christ does not hold any better by far for the sinner. Take him from all that he lives for.

Oh, it's better by far. Does your attitude toward death demonstrate this biblical reality that to depart is to be with Christ? What happens when you hear of a loved one in Christ who's gone to be with the Lord?

Is there anything of this better by far that at least comes in and makes our grief less than those that have no hope? Better by far to be with Christ.

But there's more to consider than just my own desires here.

[36 : 21] I'd like to depart and be with Christ, but it's more necessary for you, he says to the Philippians, that I remain in the body because then I could have more fruitful labor among you. Now, this church at Philippi was a ten-year-old church and it was a wonderful church.

His letter just oozes with praise and thanks and joy over this church. It's not a Corinthian church by any stretch, but it has its problems. It's not a perfect church. They've got their heresies that are working their way in.

They've got dangers. They've got problems there and they would profit from Paul's presence and ministry among them and he knows that. And so he's weighing things out on the scales.

Here's the balance. And he puts on the one side to depart is to be with Christ. That is better by far. But then he thinks of the Philippians and he says, oh yeah, they need to be shepherded. And there's that danger of trusting in the flesh that we've got to deal with. And there's the issue of humility and unity and they could profit by me coming to them.

[37 : 26] And he's starting to consider this and pretty soon the thing's balanced out again. And Paul submits his own personal desire to depart and to be with Christ to what would be best for the church.

Say, where have we seen that before? Was there not once an eternal son of God enjoying the glories in heaven? No sin, no suffering, no weakness, no pain, but he saw us plunged in deep distress.

When the father says, who, whom shall I send and who will go for us? The son said, here am I, send me father. And the son came for the sake of the church and he laid down his life for the church.

We see the same spirit breathing in the apostle. I'd rather die and be with Christ, but it's more needful for me to continue in the body to minister to you. Paul didn't have it.

He wasn't born that way, he received it. Christ was his life, the heart of Christ was the heartbeat of his heart. My church, my church.

[38 : 43] Paul is driven with a passion for the glory of Christ in his church. Convinced of this, that it's more necessary for the church, that he goes on living, he's now of the definite opinion that this is indeed what's going to happen.

Whether the Lord gave him special revelation as he did in those days, we don't know, but Paul says this in verse 25, convinced of this, convinced that it's better for you that I stay in the flesh, convinced of this, I know, I know that I will remain and will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again, your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

He can't doubt that this is going to be the outcome, that God will say, okay, you live and you go on ministering, and he was correct, for he did, he was released and entered into further service to Christ and his people before his final imprisonment and execution.

And that's why he said, I'm willing to go on living. Fruitful labor among you. Now, notice how he defines that fruitful labor among the church at Philippi.

Two things that he seeks in his ministry to them. I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith.

[40 : 07] You see the two things? Because I'll continue to be among you, you will receive two things from me. Your progress in the faith. Now, the faith can be the objective faith, the faith, the Christian faith, the truth that faith lays hold of.

Or it can be the subjective faith of trusting and the actual believing. Perhaps Paul means both here. But he says by sticking around and ministering to you, that will be to your progress in the faith.

Notice, he wants them to do more than just have the faith. Wonderful thing to have faith. Without it, no one can please God. But he wants them to progress in the faith. Just as earlier he has said, I not only want you to have love, but I want you to abound more and more in love.

So now he says by my ministry to you, you will progress in the faith. If your faith is not progressing, it is regressing.

if your faith is not going forward, it is going backward. You know, when we were in Switzerland a couple summers ago, we saw some bikers going up the Swiss Alps.

[41 : 23] I assure you it's different than riding a bike in Indiana. You could ride your bike here and be pedaling along quite nicely, a good clip, and quit pedaling. And you know, you might glide for a quarter of a mile before you've got to start pedaling again.

These guys had gears I had never seen as they're going up these mountains and their feet are just spinning. How long do you think they'd coast if they quit? 0.5 seconds?

And that's the picture of the Christian life, not Indiana. If you're not pedaling, if you're not progressing in the faith, you're going backwards.

You might not even realize I'm going backwards. It's all so subtle. But I no longer really believe that Jesus is waiting to answer prayer.

And so my prayers are cold and I don't really expect anything in prayer. And I don't pray that much because my faith is declining. Paul says, my continuing with you will be for your progress in the

faith.

[42:35] To see it going forward. Are you progressing in the faith? Is it stronger today than it was six months ago? Do you know the Bible better now than you did a year ago? Are you trusting Christ more implicitly with childlike faith?

Just taking him at his word. If he says so, then you believe it and you act upon it. That's reality for you. What are you trusting Christ for? Anything hard?

Anything impossible? Anything new? What promises are you expecting him to fulfill? Progressing in the faith. But my ministry to you will not only cause you to progress in the faith, it will also cause you joy in the faith.

True ministers of the gospel are to be anything but kill joys. Far from killing joy, they are to labor for their people's joy in the faith.

Their continuing presence among their people is to result in their progress in the faith and their joy in the faith. Notice the relationship between joy and faith.

[43:48] Paul says so in Romans 15:13, the joy and peace that comes from believing. You see, joy and believing, joy and faith.

Your joy in the faith. There are truths of the faith, things which if believed will increase your joy. Like what? Like this one, believer, believing that because of the blood of Jesus Christ, all of your sins have been forgiven.

What's that worth in terms of joy? There are other things written here. Like we know that in all things God is working for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

What's that worth to you in your present trial in terms of joy? That he is working this thing for my good. Well, if you trust in that promise, if you trust in that promiser, then your faith will be on the rise.

Your joy in the faith that Christ is always with you. He'll never forsake you. That he ever lives for you. That he prays for you. He reigns over all things for you. His child.

[45:02] These things and a host of others that he will finish the good work he's begun in you. Joy comes from living by faith in the son of God. And as your faith grows, so does your joy.

Unbelief is the killer of joy. Faith produces joy. So, is your joy in the faith being constantly sustained?

Is your joy in the faith, your joy in Christ overflowing? If not, then something is wrong either with your ministers or with you.

Because what Paul says is by my remaining in the flesh, by my remaining and ministering to you, it will minister to your progress in the faith and your joy in the faith.

And if you're not experiencing that, something's wrong with us, your ministers, or something's wrong with you. This is what I am to aim at in all my labors with you.

[46:04] this is what you are to be experiencing in all of our ministry to you. Your progress in the faith. Your joy in the faith.

And I say, what a Savior who sets men aside from other callings in life and sends them to you with this aim, to minister to your progress and joy in the faith.

He wants you to trust Him more. He wants you to enjoy Him more. Because in this way, He will be magnified more in your life, whether it be by life or by death.

Our Father, it is so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His word. Oh, for grace to trust Him more. Oh, for grace to come to some lost sinner for whom death would be a great loss.

They might come to Christ in faith this day. Christ might be their life and death might be much more better. We ask for Jesus praise that He be magnified.

[47:19] And we pray it in His name. Amen.