

Philippians Ch 1 Vs 21-30

Striving Together

We find ourselves this morning more or less in the middle of Paul the apostle's crisis, we've discussed his chains in vs 13-14, we examined the critics in vs 15-18, those who preach Christ from selfish ambitions, because of what's in it for them. and How even today things really haven't changed, people who use godliness as a means of gain and they don't sincerely preach Christ but rather they hope to somehow profit or make merchandise of the people of God. and Just because God is moving doesn't mean that God's approving, now I'm not going to get back into that today but if you want to see how even an entire nation can be being impacted for the good, how there can be a great "outpouring of living water" bringing people life and quenching their deepest thirsts and yet God still not be in approval of the means by which it comes, get last weeks tape. Because God loves mankind, and He honors His word, and so even if the individual, or the vessel who is delivering the word is out in left field, that has no bearing on the word itself, God will always honor His word. So don't be fooled by huge crowds of people and just automatically assume that it's a right on move or "outpouring" of God, but rather balance it up against the totality of the whole counsel of the word of God. and It's not just some of these televangelists who are preaching Christ from selfish ambition, it can creep in, in just about any arena of ministry.

I've no doubt that there's a portion of the Christian music industry that has fallen into the same snare, the message that some of these bands preach is right on, but why are they doing what they're doing? Is it truly to proclaim Christ and Him crucified, or does that just justify their true desire to be signed to a label, and to have a platform of influence over thousands of people and to earn a good living doing what they love to do? Because after all we're Christians so we can't be in a secular band we know that's not right, but we can still tour the world and make millions, we'll just do it in a Christian band. You see we have to be careful, even with in the 4 walls of the local church that we allow God to search our hearts to see if there's any wicked way in us, any selfish ambition lurking in us that He might lead us out of that and in the way everlasting. That we would be those who preach Christ out of love and from goodwill, having caught God's vision and God's heart, because He's not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and since we've got His burden for the lost, the love of Christ constrains us and we can't not speak of the love of God and the cross of Jesus Christ that many might come to know Him. Vs 19 begins his overview of his crisis

Vs19

Again 2 vital elements in the life of every Christian, prayer and the supply of the Spirit, how many times God works out deliverance in our lives by the means of those 2 things (again we went over that last week).

Vs20

Paul says according to my “earnest expectation” now those words speak really of an outstretched head or neck whereby there is such total and intense focus that it brings about almost a tunnel vision, I’m so focused I can’t see anything else. The vines Greek dictionary says, primarily "a watching with outstretched head" "strained expectancy, eager longing," the stretching forth of the head indicating an "expectation" of something from a certain place, The prefix apo suggests "abstraction and absorption" abstraction (or removal) from anything else that might engage the attention, and absorption in the object expected "till the fulfillment is realized." What is it that his focus is on, that he desires the fulfillment to become a reality of?

That in nothing I shall be ashamed, but rather that he would have boldness to speak and say the things that he ought to say in his trial so that Christ would be magnified in his body. Now the 1st thing we want to consider for a moment would be “that in nothing I shall be ashamed.” When it comes to Christ and our relationship with Him is there something about it that brings us shame, are we ashamed of the gospel? Therefore we don’t speak or act as we ought but rather we shy away from the situation or the circumstance. Paul says pray for me, not only that I might be delivered but also as always that I might have all boldness so that I might defend the gospel accurately and effectively.

Paul was going on trial before (for all intents and purposes) the ruler of the world. He had appealed to Caesar, and he says that through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit I expect to have all boldness when it comes time for me to make my defense. Even though it could cost me my life, I won’t back down. In Rom 1:16 Paul said, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”* I pray that we let that challenge us this morning, “that in nothing I shall be ashamed” because when you give a defense of the gospel what is the end result? Christ being magnified in your body, he says here when I speak with all boldness Christ **will be**, not might be, but will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. We considered that phrase last week (Christ being magnified in our bodies, and what a challenge and convicting principal to be confronted with), but Paul’s main concern wasn’t in being spared or put to death, but rather that he wouldn’t be ashamed. We read in Eph 6:18-20 where Paul writing to the believers in Eph from this same imprisonment exhorted them that they might be, *“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- and for me, (Paul says) that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth (here it is) **boldly** to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

You see, he didn't ask them to pray for him that he might dazzle them and bewilder them with his sweet articulation of the gospel. He just said hey, pray for me that I might speak simply as I ought to, that I wouldn't be ashamed or intimidated lest what happen, he be ashamed at the Lord's appearing. Because you see to be ashamed before man of the Lord, is to be ashamed before the Lord of what we did before man. The apostle John wrote in 1 John 2:28 "*And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.*" Jesus said, "*For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.*" Luke 9:27

Paul is saying hey, I don't want to be that guy, I don't want to be ashamed of the Lord because I don't want the Lord to be ashamed of me. and The same is true for us, if we desire for the Lord to say, "Well done good and faithful servant" and not be ashamed of us at His appearing, then likewise we need not to be ashamed of Him prior to His appearing and so may the Lord grant us boldness to speak as we ought to speak, that Christ might be magnified in our bodies. Now, how is Christ magnified in our bodies? I mean, how can a mere sinful human magnify the awesome greatness of the Son of God, I liked Wiersbe's example, the stars are much bigger than the telescope but the telescope "magnifies" them and brings them closer. Well in a similar manner the believer's body is to be the telescope that brings Jesus Christ close to people.

So as we decrease and He increases in our lives, Jesus doesn't have to be some distant concept of a God who is out there somewhere, but people can see Him practically and personally in our lives. It goes back to the principal that you and I are the only bible that most people will ever read, are they getting the gospel from the pages of our lives or are they now more confused then ever, if what our example is, is the closest they get to Christ. Well how can Paul say that Christ will be magnified in his body, how can he be so confident?

Vs21

This is the vs we closed with last week, and you remember we were confronted with the question of what is it for me personally to live, and in that we find out what to die, is. If to live is to amass a fortune then to die is to lose it all, if to live is uncertainty and questions, then to die is fear and terror. But if to live is Christ, then to die is gain, and because with Paul to live - Christ, then he could say beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ will be magnified in my body, and don't be confused it's not an arrogant statement, he's not saying I'm going to magnify Christ, he's saying that Christ will magnify Himself in his body because for to me to live - Christ, therefore to die, is gain.

How is death gain for the believer, well we don't have time to exhaust the means of gain through death but briefly we know that right now we have at times a clouded relationship with God due to sin and transgression in our lives, things come up, we get in the flesh and our relationship is hindered with the Lord. But by death is unbroken fellowship and union with Christ, by death we are freed from this body of sin and death. We read in 1 Cor 15 that, *"the body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."* We'll be freed from temptation, and delivered from our enemies in Rev 21:3-7 the apostle John is writing and he says, *"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."*

Truly for the Christian to die is gain, and this vs radically diffuses the concept of soul sleep, Paul didn't say for me to live is Christ and to die is to sleep until Christ raises my mortal body. He didn't say that, in another place he said to be absent from the body is to be present with Christ, and man is appointed once to die and after that (not sleep) but the judgment. Not to mention all the heavenly scenes we see in the book of Rev whereby the saints are before the throne of God praising or petitioning God to avenge their death (those who were martyred) they weren't sleeping somewhere, they were before the throne. and So if to live is Christ, then to die is gain

Vs 22

Notice again the emphatic statement here, he says if I live on in my flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor, not this might mean fruit, but this will mean fruit. There's no question mark there, he is absolutely confident, why, how? It goes back to vs 21, to live is Christ, he was abiding in Christ, and when you abide in Christ, you can expect fruit. Prov 12:12 says, *"The wicked covet the catch of evil men, But the root of the righteous yields fruit."* Did that say that now and then the root of the righteous might yield fruit? No, the root of the righteous *yields* fruit, you see if Jesus Christ is at the root of your life, if He is the center of your life, your foundation, if for you to live is Christ, then fruit will be yielding or being produced in your life. It will happen, you see John ch 15, which is the ch that we often point to concerning abiding in Christ, (and rightfully so, it is that) but the primary emphasis seems to be more on bearing fruit, Jesus said, there in John 15 that, *"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."* How do I bear fruit? By abiding, or sending my roots deep down into Christ.

Of Course in this context “fruit” being the godly end results of our endeavors in the Lord, the end results of our good works, and any work that we do that’s good is only by us abiding in Christ and Him abiding in us because only 1 is good and that is God. and The result of God dwelling in you by the power of His Holy Spirit is love, which produces good works in your life. Because Love does no harm, (the bible says) but rather it will do the right thing by people, it will do good things concerning people. That’s why the bible says; owe no one anything except to love one another because your labor in the Lord is not in vain, it will produce fruit and you will one day reap that harvest if you don’t lose heart. (That’s what the bible teaches)

So Paul says that if he lives on in the flesh there will be fruit from his labor, another mind blowing, sobering set of words to consider this morning, can you emphatically say that by your very existence that fruit is abounding to your account because you are laboring in the Lord? Paul was hardcore, and he said that he would that we all would be like him, minus his chains and imprisonments, (the hardships and sufferings he had to endure). But he’s basically saying hey, I can’t just live as a pew warmer or a church goer because there is a whole world out there, a whole city out there, a whole neighborhood out there of whom the majority don’t know Christ. Jesus Christ and Him crucified was Paul’s passion, and his burden was lost humankind. and As long as he was alive he’d be sharing the love of Christ, therefore he could say that hey, if I’m alive, I’ll be fruitful because I’m available to Jesus using my life and when Christ is using your life, it will mean fruit. But he confronted with a predicament, to live or die, he says what shall I choose; I’m not sure. If it were up to me right now to depart and be with the Lord or to stay and labor in the flesh, I’m not certain what I’d choose.

Vs23-24

I think this is a fairly common struggle for every believer as they contemplate death. Man to depart from this tent, or this shell and be with Christ is far better than anything we could even conceive. and The words “far better” are really weak, there’s really no language, English or Greek that can do justice to the exceeding and abundant greatness of being with Christ. In another place Paul said that to try to describe the things in heaven would be unlawful. Or to understand it another way, it should be against the law to use the finite words of man to try to explain the infinite ecstasy and eternal bliss of the heavenly scene, there are just no words that this world has to offer that can do heaven justice. Who in their *right mind* and I emphasize “right mind” wouldn’t want to be there, but there is the realistic struggle of the desire to be with those we love here on earth as well. You know when we think of either our family or maybe our friends, those whom we support and love, you don’t want to leave them, you want to be there for them, to meet their needs, physically, emotionally, and primarily spiritually. and So we’re sort of caught in this tension, we want to be with the Lord, and we know that that’s better than anything this world could ever offer, yet at the same time we want to be with those we love here as well, and that’s what Paul is expressing.

Vs25-27

Paul is saying listen, no matter what happens to me, whether I'm released or kept in prison or whatever, you follow hard after Christ. Let your conduct, or maybe your bibles says "conversation" specifically this is a word that speaks of citizenship, and that's significant here because he's writing to a Roman colony, these are citizens of Rome, which was something that was taken with great pride. Rome was the envy of the world, they were the rulers of the world, everyone else was 2nd rate compared to Rome as far as modern sophistication or technology was concerned. They dominated the world in military might and material gain and if you've seen any of the old movies you see how they took great pride in being a citizen of Rome.

There would be people who would pay huge sums of money to purchase citizenship just so that they could say that they were Roman citizens. It would almost be like being a U.S. citizen today, when you go other places you get a profound appreciation for the United States, I'm not saying that there are no other good places to be, but for me, there's no place like home, and millions if not billions of people envy the United States. and There's a certain amount of dignity that you carry with you when you're in other countries because you're from the U.S. and people want to know all about it. and So this is a powerfully profound statement that Paul is making to them, he's saying let your citizenship be worthy, or that word speaks of an equal balance on the scales, let your conduct or citizenship balance out, or be worthy not of Rome, but of the gospel of Christ. The good news of Christ, Paul mentions the gospel 6 times in the 1st ch alone, and he says here hey, I want you to reflect accurately the kingdom of God; you are ambassadors of the kingdom.

You know there are times when you'll be places and someone who represents a certain place or company maybe that you're familiar with will do something that will bring complete shame and embarrassment and you're ashamed on their behalf because you know that they aren't representing what America or that company or that family or whatever is really all about. Paul says represent your home town (that is the Kingdom of God) accurately and responsibly. So that regardless if I'm there or not I'll hear of what's going on (and by the way people hear about what's going on in our lives whether we like it or not) it goes back to that, you're the only bible some people may ever read principal. What is that people hear about your life or my life? Paul says, I want to hear that you are standing in 1 spirit, with 1 mind, striving together for "the faith" of the gospel. What's the call? To unity; "striving together" being the key words, and don't be confused, the words "strife" and to "strive" are 2 different things, strife speaking of contention, striving speaking of agonizing laboring intensely together for the furtherance of the faith of the gospel.

When you're of the same mind and of the same spirit, you're going to be able to labor together because you'll be agreed, there will be no contention among you, but rather there will be peace, and agreement. The bible teaches that there's no way that 2 can walk together lest they be agreed, you see if we're heading 2 opposite directions we can't walk together, that's common sense. Well in the same way, if you're heading one way concerning the scriptures and I'm heading the *right way* then the same principal applies we can't go there together because we're not heading the same direction. The Holy Spirit here through Paul the apostle call us to unity, in Eph 4:1-3 Paul said, *"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* and Again in 1 Cor 1:10 *"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."* Now he's not saying that we all need to be clones of one another, but that we should have the same scriptural convictions concerning major doctrinal issues and not be divided but rather United, because it goes back to that old adage, "United we stand, divided we fall".

That's what's so great about just going through the word, and not seeking to add to it or take away from it, but just seeking to receive the whole counsel of the word of God from the totality of the balance of the scriptures. Because in that we will be being grafted together the Holy Spirit causing us to be of one mind and one spirit, not my mind, God's mind, not my convictions and spirit, but the Lords, and when we're one on these things we become a conduit through which the Spirit can flow because there's no obstructions blocking the flow and the gospel is propelled through unity. But if Satan can get us to compromise scriptural doctrine, then he'll cripple and defeat the ministry, his motto is "divide and conquer". But God calls us to strive together as a team for the faith of the gospel; teamwork is critical in the Kingdom.

Vs28

Now the word "terrified" there is the picture of a horse who's spooked before a battle and hesitant for fear to enter into it. Now nowhere does the bible encourage us to go looking for the fight, but when the fight comes to us, we're not to back down for fear's sake. Because God hasn't given us a spirit of fear but one of love and of power and a sound mind. and For you the very fact that you're confronted with the warfare is confirmation and proof for you that you're saved, because if you weren't a threat to the enemy, if you weren't a child of God, why would he bother with you. Better to leave you alone to allow you to drown in your own destruction. But as a child of God you pose a threat, therefore he comes looking for you (we discussed the warfare not to long ago in Eph ch 6) and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, and that's why we need to be suited up with the whole armor of God. Because the weapons of our warfare aren't carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

Your boldness is to them proof of their perdition, that's what this is saying, it's to them saying "you lose" notice it's proof to *them* of perdition, but to you salvation and that from God. The warfare you experience the persecution that you suffer as a child of God for Christ's sake is proof to you that you are in fact saved that God has ushered you by His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit into new life. 2 Cor 5:17 *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* and The opposition that you face for Christ's sake testifies of that fact, that's what Paul is saying.

Vs29

One word I want you to take notice of in this vs "granted" to suffer for Christ's sake, to experience conflict for the sake of the gospel is in fact a gift from God. What a mind blowing and deep concept that is, but when we realize how He suffered for us, it becomes an honor to suffer for Him. You recall when Peter and John had been preaching and the council had seized them and couldn't figure out what to do with them since they'd done nothing illegal. We read in Acts 5:40-41 *"and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."* Paul wrote in Rom 5:3-4 *"we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."*

In other words God works deep things in our lives through tribulation and persecution that can be used to His glory as a matter of fact He worked salvation to all who would call upon His name through the suffering and persecution of His Son. and So the things that we desire to shun as humans, if we can truly grasp the heart of God we'd do well to embrace as believers, that's why James came to the place where he could say count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Why, because the trials are fun? No, because God's doing a work and through them molding your life, and when you don't flinch in persecution it proves to your enemies that you have something. Before we close turn to 1st Pet ch 4 Vs 12-16 You say, Jeff what do those preachers who say that if you suffer it's because you lack faith do with vs like these, I mean Peter is saying glorify God in your suffering. I don't know, I guess they don't read them because according to my bible suffering for Christ is not a problem, it's a privilege. Lets finish the ch

Vs30

You saw it in Philippi and now hear what's happening in Rome and God has allowed you to enter in to a like privilege of suffering for His names sake.