

Dear Philippians, III

The Secret to Enjoying Life

February 9, 2003

THE PUBLIC SQUARE

- This is the *agora* (market place) of ancient Philippi.

When Paul ruined the business reputation of a fortune teller (by casting a spirit out of her) her owners seized him and Silas and dragged them to this area. (Acts 16:19)

- These are the remains of the *bema* (raised judge's platform).

This is where the magistrates would've listened to the charges and had them stripped, beaten, and imprisoned. (Acts 16:22-23)

Ten years later, most likely facing execution in Rome, Paul's first concern is to reassure the Philippians of his condition.

12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. 15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16 The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18 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, 19 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. 20 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. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 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! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 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, 26 so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me. – *Philippians 1:12-26 NIV*

Paul spent two years in a Caesarean prison (on false charges of desecrating the temple) before appealing to the infamous Nero.

During his transfer to Rome he was shipwrecked, stranded over the winter on an island, and bitten by a poisonous snake. And still, he says, "I will continue to rejoice!" (v. 18)

I WILL REJOICE!

Q: What's his secret? What makes his joy so unshakable?

Last week Paul modeled four principles for enjoying people. This week we can see three essentials to enjoying life itself.

1. The first one has to do with: **Paul's Perspective**

Amazingly, Paul doesn't focus on *woe-is-me*; he recognizes that God can and will use these afflictions very purposefully.

... 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. – *Philippians 1:12-13 NIV*

The palace (Praetorian) guard was an elite and powerful group of 10,000 men. They ousted and elevated emperors at their pleasure.

Paul had “planned many times” (Rom 1:13) to minister in Rome.

... I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. – *Romans 1:15 NIV*

But he had no idea he'd be living among future prominent leaders and an incredibly strategic group for impacting the Roman Empire.

- And (19-year-old +/-) Nero was footing the bill!

We don't know the specifics of Paul's impact among the palace guard, but when he ended this letter, he wrote that:

All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. – *Philippians 4:22 NIV*

Paul observed another unexpected result: courage is contagious.

Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. – *Philippians 1:14 NIV*

Because of his chains, he ended up writing much of our NT and encouraging a global community for going on 2000 years now.

... in faithfulness you have afflicted me. May your unfailing love be my comfort ... – *Psalms 119:75-76 NIV*

- We must trust the affection behind the affliction

No one perceives all of God's reasoning and rational, but Paul possessed the perspective that there's purpose behind his pain.

The first key to joyful living: **Perceiving God's faithfulness.**

2. The next essential has to do with: **Paul's Priorities**

There were Christian leaders in Rome who had a personal rivalry with Paul; they may have been threatened by his popularity or perhaps fearful of being connected to his legal problems.

- But they tried to discredit Paul while he was in prison.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry ... [They] preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. - *Philippians 1:15-17 NIV*

But Paul wouldn't let people who didn't share his priorities set his agenda. He had a firm grasp on what has substance.

But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. - *Philippians 1:18 NIV*

This is an amazing response; it's tempting to take offense; make mountains out of mole-hills; and blow things out of proportion. But Paul is so certain of his priorities (what's important) that he refuses to let pettiness prohibit his purpose.

- We must not subtract from what counts

Q: How many arguments in our marriages or other relationships are over petty problems that only seem big at the moment?

- We need to ask ourselves more often: "What does it matter?"

I blocked many meaningful moments in my marriage getting upset about missing socks. Now I safety-pin them before putting them in the wash ... only took me 15 years to figure that one out!

The 2nd key to enjoying life: **Distinguishing the petty from the primary.**

3. The final essential has to do with: **Paul's Purpose**

To put it simply: His purpose was just BIGGER than his problems.

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**. – *Philippians 1:19 NIV*

The word “deliverance” is “soteria” it can mean a *temporal* remedy or an *eternal* remedy. It’s a no-lose situation. He’ll be vindicated and *released* or executed and *set free*.

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**. – *Philippians 1:20-21 NIV*

To live is Christ! The **totality** of Paul’s life is found in exaltation of and intimate relationship with Jesus.

- He didn’t say: “to *preach* is Christ” or “to *serve* is Christ.”
- He didn’t say: “to live is *religion*” “*church*” or “*ministry*.”
- He’s not referring to a cause, a mission, or an achievement.

It’s all about the person of Christ. Paul isn’t suicidal; he’s aware that death only means more relationship with his creator.

Q: How would you fill in this blank: For to me, to live is _____.

For many people in our culture, the answers would be: “For to me, to live is career, money, sex, popularity, prestige, food.”

- But then to die is _____ ... what? This is the crucial one.
- If the 1st answer isn’t Christ then the 2nd will be loss.

God made you for a purpose; you’re not an accident. Possessions, position, and pleasures won’t last a lifetime let alone eternity.

Bill worked 5 years to pay off his car. Yesterday someone opened their car’s door and dented Bill’s car, really scraped it up bad. But, Bill just laughed, “Don’t worry about it.” Did I mention he’s holding a winning lottery ticket worth millions?

- What he holds has more value than the sum of his possessions.

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. – *2 Corinthians 4:17 NIV*

A keen sense of what is temporary and what has eternal value is vital for peace and contentment.

The third and final key to enjoying life: **Investing my life in that which outlasts it.**