

### 3. Learning Why We Do Not Need to Fear Death

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that God can work through every situation that they face in their lives. Paul knew that the Lord was working through his life even though he was a prisoner. The fact that he was a prisoner being guarded by the imperial guard meant that all of the soldiers that guarded the Roman emperor heard about the Gospel. Paul had only one goal in his life and that was to live for Christ. Paul knew that when he died that he would be with Christ for all eternity. As a result, Paul was eager to glorify Christ either by life or by death.

We see the attitude of Paul in Philippians 1:21-24 where we read, “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. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.” Paul was eager to live for Christ as long as he lived. Paul knew that when he died, he would actually gain, because he would be with Christ forever.

Paul also realized that if it was the plan of Christ for him to continue to live on this earth, the Lord would give him fruit from his labor. The word that is translated “fruit” can mean the fruit of trees, vines, or children. It can also speak of spiritual fruit and that is the way that it is used in this verse. That is the way Paul used this word in Romans 1:13 where we read, “Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.” Paul wanted to have spiritual fruit wherever he went. This should also be our desire and the desire for our children.

Although Paul knew that there would be more fruit as he continued to serve the Lord on this earth, Paul did not want to make the choice for his own benefit. Instead, he wanted God to choose what he did. The word that is translated “hard pressed” means *to press you in on every side*. Luke 8:45 says, “And Jesus said, ‘Who touched Me?’ When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, ‘Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, “Who touched Me?”’” Here, we see that Christ felt the pressure of the crowd on every side. In the same way, Paul felt pressed on two sides. On one hand, he wanted to go to heaven right away to be with the Lord. On the other hand, Paul understood that the Lord still had work for him to do on the earth. As a result, Paul was prepared to remain on the earth as long as the Lord needed him to minister to the Christians in the various churches.

Because Paul understood that the Lord still had ministry for him to do, Philippians 1:25-26 says, “And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.” The word that is translated “being confident” *means to believe or to be persuaded*. Philippians 1:6 says, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” Just as Paul was persuaded that the Lord would continue to work in the lives of the Christians in Philippi, Paul was also persuaded that the Lord still had more ministry for him to do on the earth.

That is why Paul said that he would remain and continue on the earth for the present. We see that Paul realized that the Lord had some specific things for him to do. Paul knew that the Lord wanted him to continue to help the Christians with their progress. The word that is translated “progress” means *continuing growth in learning or understanding*. 1 Timothy 4:15 says, “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” Paul realized that part of his ministry was to help Christians continue to grow in their understanding.

Paul realized that the Lord was also leaving him on the earth to help the Christians grow in their joy of faith. Paul understood the principle that increasing faith produces greater joy. This is clearly seen in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 where we read, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” As the Thessalonians grew in the Lord, even though they were going through a difficult time, they continued to experience the joy of the Holy Spirit. Paul knew that this was also true for the Philippian Christians. The Philippian Christians would be able to rejoice because of the way that they saw the Lord work in their life and through the life of Paul. Paul expected the Lord to work in his life so that he would be set free to make one more visit to the Philippians.

Paul went on to write in Philippians 1:27-28, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.” The word that is translated “conduct” means *the way a person lives who lives according to the law*. The word is only used one other time in the New Testament. That is in Acts 23:1 where we read, “Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’” Here, we see that Paul had lived in such a way that he did not break the Jewish law in order to reach Jews for Christ.

In the same way, we see that we are to live our lives as Christians in a way that will bring honor to the gospel of Christ. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here, we are reminded that we are to live our lives in such a way that the Lord will be honored because we are serving one another in love. Paul said that it was his desire to hear that the Philippian Christians were walking that way whether he came to visit them or if he heard that report from other Christians that had visited Philippi.

The word that is translated “stand fast” means *to stand firm or to persevere*. In Galatians 5:1, we read, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Here, we see that the Galatians were to stand firm in their liberty and not to become entangled again in a yoke of bondage. In 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 we read, “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all *that* you *do* be done with love.” In these verses, we see that we are to stand fast in the faith and do everything that we do in love. When we stand fast in liberty and do everything in love, we see that we will be one in spirit and in mind. That is due to the fact that our human spirits will be led by the Holy Spirit and we will allow

the Word of God to guide our thoughts and actions.

The word that is translated “striving together” means *to be working together*. The only other place where this word is used is in Philippians 4:3 where we read, “And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.” Here, we see that these women had worked together with Paul in sharing the Gospel. In the same way, we are to work together to make certain that others have the opportunity to hear the Gospel clearly so that they can come to faith in Christ.

When we work together under the leadership of the Holy Spirit to share the Word of God, Acts 4:31 tells us, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” We see that unity under the direction of the Holy Spirit will give us boldness to speak the Word of God and share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. As a result of that boldness, we will not be terrified by our adversaries. When Christians suffer for the Gospel, that attitude causes those who reject Christ to realize the message is true and that they are facing judgment. Acts 5:41-42 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.” The fact that the apostles were willing to suffer caused the Jewish religious leaders to realize that their faith was genuine.

While the Gospel is a warning of coming judgment to those who reject, it is a message of salvation to those who believe. That is why Philippians 1:29-30 goes on to say, “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me.” Here, we are reminded of the fact that it is a great privilege to both believe and suffer for the sake of Christ. The word that is translated “granted” comes from the word for grace and means *to give with grace and kindness or to forgive another person*. 1 Corinthians 2:12 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” This verse reminds us that the Holy Spirit helps us to understand the things that are freely given to us by God.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that just as God gave us many things freely that as Christians we can now give to others freely. Paul knew that the Philippians were suffering just as they had seen him suffer. Now, they were having that same privilege of sharing in that ministry for the sake of others. This is also a great privilege for each of us. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn why they do not need to fear death and also that they can enjoy the privilege of suffering for Christ.