

Fellowship of Joy in Persecution

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: 24 June 2012

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] Take your Bibles this morning and let's open them to Philippians chapter 1 and I'm going to start reading here in just a minute verse 12.

Paul's love letter to the Philippians.

And here's part of it. Verse 12. But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.

So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard and to all the rest that my chains are in Christ. And most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife and some also from goodwill. The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my chains.

[1:17] But the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached.

And it is this I rejoice. Yes, and will rejoice. For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed. But with all boldness as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. 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.

[2:26] 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 Christ Jesus by my coming to you again.

All right, that's a lot to take this morning. So let's get right into it. And yet, even before getting to the text proper, I need to remind us all of something.

I've taken a week off from Philippians. And it's sometimes an easy thing to lose track of the theme of a book. And we are working our way through this book, this letter, this love letter.

And it's important for us to keep always before us, in our minds, the theme. And the broadest sense of the word theme, the book of Philippians, the letter to the Philippians, has this as its theme, joy.

It's joy. In the broadest sense. Not happiness, remember. But joy. Joy. There's a difference between the two. Happiness is based on circumstances.

[3:40] And so when the circumstances change, your happiness changes. And so happiness is not always something you have. But joy is different. True joy, biblical joy, if you have it, does not change with the ups and downs of life's circumstances, regardless of the circumstances.

It just doesn't change. Because you see, by definition, and I want to remind you of this, biblical joy, true joy, is a conviction. It's a conviction that is settled in your heart and in your mind.

It's not something you're wavering on or wondering about. It's a conviction, a strong conviction, that God sovereignly controls all the events of life.

That's what joy is based upon. God is in sovereign control of all things. For your good, the believer's good, but supremely for God's glory.

That's joy defined. And this joy is available to all who obey God. That, by the way, is the only qualification or condition of joy because the only destroyer of joy is sin.

[4:55] And sin destroys our fellowship with God. Therefore, it destroys our joy. All right, so, since joy's only condition is obedient fellowship with God, and since joy was something Paul shared with his readers, very clear from this letter, then the theme of Philippians, more finely tuned, would be

the fellowship of joy.

That, I think, is a good way to define the theme. The fellowship of joy. A fellowship, this joy that's rooted in our mutual fellowship with Christ.

And it is a joy shared in our mutual fellowship with one another. And so, it's the fellowship of joy. Now, here again, and I'll just give this to you, and we're going to work our way through this book. Here is kind of the main points of the letter that we're going to work our way through. First, you have the fellowship of joy in prayer. We've already covered that ground. This morning, we're going to consider the fellowship of joy in persecution.

That will be our subject this morning. Then we'll move to the fellowship of joy in perfection, spiritual perfection. And then the fellowship of joy that we find in the person of Christ, what we know about the person of Christ.

[6 : 25] And then finally, some kind of catch-all things. Paul is going to reveal to us the fellowship of joy in regard to some practical matters.

There's the outline for the book, and we're going to move our way through it over the next several weeks. Now, this morning, the fellowship of joy in persecution.

Joy in persecution. Joy and persecution. Hmm. I think it would be difficult to find two things that seem to be more incompatible.

Joy and persecution. I mean, how can you put these two things together in the same discussion? Joy and persecution.

And yet, it's very clear that not only does Paul put the two things together in this section of Philippians, but clearly, Paul is suggesting to us that these two things, joy and persecution, have a vital link.

[7 : 34] They are vitally linked together. I mean, listen, joy, again, is conditional. Conditional, conditional upon your obedience to God and to His Word. And obedience to God and His Word will always result in some measure of persecution.

I guarantee you. In fact, what did Jesus say? Jesus said in John 15, 20, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

It's very clear, isn't it? Very straightforward. There's nothing vague about that. And so I would ask you, is Jesus your master? Is He your Lord?

I hope you could say yes to that. And so then, are you Jesus' servant? Well, if He's your master, then you are His servant. And what does a servant do?

Obeys His master. And so Jesus said, And since they persecuted the master, they will also persecute His servants. It's just clear from Scripture.

[8 : 46] Or I could point out what Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3, verse 12. He said, Yes, Yes, And all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will, not may, but will suffer persecution.

No ifs, ands, or buts about it. See, here's the deal. And I wish we had time to expand upon this, but we don't. And here's the reason behind Christian persecution on an individual basis.

Here's the reason. Goodness always exposes wickedness. Always puts wickedness in bold relief. In the brightest of light.

Goodness exposes wickedness, and that makes the wicked uncomfortable. You know it to be true, don't you? Haven't you experienced that? And I could go further.

Purity always exposes immorality and makes the immoral feel guilty. And so they're going to lash out at you.

[9 : 59] Faith, that is, biblical faith, always exposes unbelief. It sets unbelief in bold relief.

And so it makes the unbeliever angry. Angry. And so the more you and I live good, good lives, that is, good as defined by Scripture, the more the wicked are going to be angry with us.

And the more they're going to react. And the more you and I live and strive to live pure lives in moral purity, spiritual purity, and purity in the broadest sense, including every element of that, the more we desire to live that way, the more the immoral around us are going to feel guilty.

And they're going to react. The more you and I live biblically, according to our biblical faith, the more the unbelieving are going to be angry with us.

And they're going to respond. They're going to respond in many different ways, of course. for some to extreme. To the extreme.

[11 : 17] And this is going on in many places around our world. And it even does happen from time to time in our country. Or they may respond in more subtle ways, but they're going to respond.

Paul said, Yes, you can be sure about this. All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will, will, will suffer persecution. Some measure persecution.

All right? So it's very clear from Scripture. But now you're probably thinking, Okay, I'm with you on that, Pastor. And I agree that persecution is promised to the believer. There's no doubt about that. And therefore, it is inevitable to some degree or another. But that does not necessarily answer the question about joy. This correlation or connection or this vital union between joy and persecution. How do the persecution, how do persecution and joy go together? How could that be possible? How are they vitally linked? Well, it was Jesus who first spoke of the vital link between joy and persecution.

[12:23] The believer's joy and persecution. In Matthew chapter 5 and verse 10, and we'll not turn to it, but let me read it to you. In Matthew 5 verse 10, one of the Beatitudes given during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said this.

He said, Blessed are those who are persecuted. And then He gives His qualifier, for righteousness' sake. See, not all persecutions for righteousness' sake. But that which is as a result of living righteously.

He said, All those who are persecuted are blessed. Blessed, He says, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. He said, Blessed are you when they revile or insult you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake.

There's another qualifier. For my sake. And then He says this. Rejoice. Rejoice. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

For great is your reward in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. That is all who have come before you have been persecuted. You ought to rejoice that you're counted among them.

[13:38] Blessed, rejoice, exceedingly glad. But again, why? Why? That is, why are we blessed? We were persecuted.

Why should we rejoice? Well, that brings us to what Paul says about this in our text. Here in the letter to the Philippians. Now listen.

Get this down. Three things brought Paul more joy in his life than all the other things in his life combined.

Three things. Here they are. The gospel of Christ. The glory of Christ.

And the growth of Christ's church. Growth in every sense. These three things. You read Paul's letters and you catch something of the passion of his life.

[14:47] Three things brought him more joy than anything else could. The gospel of Christ, the glory of Christ, the growth of his church.

And so it's not hard to understand how persecution could bring Paul so much joy because, believe it or not, and you should believe it, Paul's persecution, he tells us, his persecution worked for the benefit of all three of those things.

The gospel of Christ, the glory of Christ, and the growth of Christ's church. His persecution actually brought these things about. Enhanced these things. His persecution benefited these three things that brought him the most joy in his life.

And we should be just like Paul in this. Regardless, again, regardless of the form of our persecution, the severity or the lack thereof, whatever degree of persecution we may suffer, these three things are accomplished through persecution.

And so here in Philippians 1, verse 12 to 26, Paul provides three reasons. Three reasons we should rejoice in persecution.

[16:06] Three reasons. First, for the gospel of Christ is advanced by it. Are you listening?

We should rejoice in persecution for the gospel of Christ is advanced by it. second, we should rejoice in persecution for the glory of Christ is affirmed by it.

And third, we should rejoice in persecution for the growth of Christ's church is accomplished by it. So first, rejoice in persecution for the gospel of Christ is advanced by it.

look at verse 12 again. Paul said, but I want you to know, brethren, speaking to the church, the believers of Philippi, and he says, I want you to know something.

And this is an expression that really means I want you to get this, implying that this is something you may have missed. I want you to know.

[17:21] And what was it he wanted them to know? Look at it. That the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.

The things that happened to me. What things? His chains. He's going to tell us in verse 13. His chains. That's what happened to Paul. His chains.

That is, Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter. And he is explaining why we ought to rejoice in that.

So the things that happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. He says, I want you to get this. I want you to know this. You may have missed this about the value, the greater value of persecution.

It's almost as if Paul is saying, it may seem to you, dearly beloved there at Philippi, it may seem to you from a purely human perspective that my imprisonment is a catastrophe.

[18:29] He's saying to them from an earthly, just a purely earthly point of view. And at no time can we just totally separate ourselves from an earthly point of view.

And so, this was the case with the church at Philippi. He's saying, it may seem to you that from an earthly point of view, it may seem that my arrest and my imprisonment is a major setback for the cause of Christ.

So, I want you to know something. He's saying to them, you may be thinking that the enemy has achieved a major win in his battle against the advancement of Christianity, the spread of Christianity.

It may seem these things may seem true to you. And I think the Philippians were very likely thinking many of these things.

Hence why Paul addressed this issue. Now, think about it. This is the Apostle Paul, the great missionary, the great preacher.

[19:34] I doubt seriously there has been a missionary since the Apostle Paul through whom God has been so pleased to accomplish as much.

The great missionary. This is the Apostle Paul, the great evangelist. There is no telling how many people came to Christ as a result of the direct witness of the Apostle Paul.

I mean, this is the Apostle Paul, the successful church planter. Think about all the churches Paul planted as God led him here and there throughout the known world.

All of his missionary journeys and such. The great church planter. I mean, it seems prison would be the last place God would want him to be. Doesn't it seem that way to you?

I think it did to the Philippians. And so what does Paul say about that? He says you should know. You've missed this and you should know dear brothers and sisters that my imprisonment, persecution in my life has actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.

[20:53] Not a hindrance to it, but the furtherance of it. Not a battle won by the enemy, but a battle won for the cause of Christ. That's what you should know.

And by the way, the word translated furtherance, at least that's the English word used by the New King James Version of the Bible, is a word that is a military word.

It's an expression used primarily in the military, at least originally so, and described the advancement of an army. But not just simply their marching forward, but the advancement of a force, an army, as they encountered many obstacles.

And as they were taking each obstacle, and so not just simply a march, a leisurely march, but a battle as they were gaining ground and gaining more ground and against the obstacles that they faced.

That's the word here that's translated furtherance. I think the better word would be advancement of the gospel. The steady advancement of the gospel against all obstacles.

[22:08] And this is what Paul said his persecution, his imprisonment was accomplishing. The advance of the gospel. He was saying my imprisonment has turned out to be a major boon for the advancement of the cause of Christ, the gospel of Christ, and I could not be happier.

He said, I wonder if we would feel the same way in his place. We who have difficulty experiencing any measure of persecution for our faith, we more likely think God is somehow mad at us because he's allowing us to suffer because we just gave maybe a short little witness, so we decided to live a certain way and we think maybe we're out of fellowship with God or maybe this is too much for us but here is Paul in prison.

By the way, he's in prison here in Rome and will be there for two years and it's unclear what happened after that. Very likely he met his death, was executed.

And Paul says, I could not be happier. You see, then Paul gives us some details for how the gospel advanced as a result of his imprisonment.

In the first place, Paul said in verse 13, it has become evident to the whole palace guard. You see that in verse 13? Here he's explaining why he's so full of joy at his imprisonment and why he is saying that the church at Philippi the believers there ought to also be rejoicing.

[23 : 56] Because the gospel is advancing and he identifies some of that advancement. In the first place, it has become evident to the whole palace guard. You might have the transliteration right out of the Greek, the Praetorian identifies a very special elite police force, if you will, there in the capital of the Roman Empire, there in Rome.

They had charge over Paul. And they did for two years. And for two years, the Apostle Paul, though he was in prison, not in a traditional prison, but in a house, but he was not free because for two years, Paul was handcuffed to a Roman soldier.

And I'm sure for two years, he had handcuffed to him dozens of different soldiers there as part of this elite force, the Praetorian Guard.

Can you imagine being handcuffed to the Apostle Paul? Imagine you're an unbeliever and it is your job to guard Paul.

And not just simply guard his house or guard his prison cell, but you have to be there with him handcuffed with a short handcuff about 18 inches or so, and you have to be there with him all the time, all the time, all the time.

[25 : 29] Can you imagine that? Just think about it. What they heard from Paul's lips as he prayed, as he wrote letters, as he spoke to people who would come and visit with him, as he witnessed constantly of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Can you imagine what your soldier, what you heard every day, day in, day out? Can you imagine what you saw in the apostle Paul? I mean, the man is in prison, he is handcuffed, and yet he is rejoicing in the Lord rather than complaining about it.

Can you imagine what they heard, what they saw? And I think the implication, clear implication, is that many of these palace guards were saved, became Christians. As a result of Paul's faithful witness, and not just the words, but his very life that exuded the life of Christ to them.

It was very clear to them. And so many of them became Christians, and I think it's very natural because this seems to be pretty clear from other places in Scripture that these palace guards took the gospel, their new found faith, home with them, and their families were saved, and all of them had household servants, and very likely many of them, if not all of them, were saved.

And can you imagine the growth of the kingdom, the expansion of the kingdom while Paul was a prisoner for two years? I think that's what he's saying.

[27 : 02] Now listen, these guards were saved while Paul was in prison. Do you think Paul could have ever had an audience with the Praetorian guard, any member of them, if he had not been in prison?

Likely not. Paul mentions another group of people. He says, it has become evident to the whole palace guard and to all the rest.

And it's just kind of open ended. He leaves it right there. We don't know who these people are. And yet we really do if we look at Acts chapter 28. In fact, let me read it to you. You can turn to it if you'd like.

In Acts chapter 28 and verse 17, and this I believe is the account of this time in Paul's life when he was in prison in Rome from where he wrote the letter to the Philippians and a few other letters as well.

And this is what it said in verse 17, and it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. He's in prison. Verse 16 tells us that. Under guard.

[28 : 13] And he calls the leaders of the Jews together, the leaders there in Rome. So when they had come together, he said to them, men, brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, that is, I'm innocent, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go because there was no cause for putting me to death.

But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. For this reason, therefore, I have called for you, to see you, and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain, that is, for their salvation I am a prisoner.

Then they said to him, we neither receive letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken evil against you, they were ignorant of all the charges that had been leveled at Paul before he took this long journey to Rome under arrest.

We don't know anything about it, but we desire to hear from you what you think for concerning this sect, that is, Christianity, we know that it is spoken against everywhere, that is, it is very unpopular, we know that much.

So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, this private home where he is under lock and key and chained to a Roman soldier, they came to him there, to whom he, Paul, explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God.

[30 : 01] And what happened? Persuading them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the prophets. He took the whole Old Testament and preached to them Christ from morning until evening.

Can you imagine? And some were persuaded, some believed by the things which were spoken and some disbelieved, of course.

So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word. The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, Go to this people and say, Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, Seeing you will see and not perceive, for the hearts of this people have grown dull.

Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn so that I should heal them.

He's speaking a word of prophecy, a word of condemnation to those who left unbelieving.

Therefore, let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it.

[31 : 18] And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves. There were believers now, new believers and unbelievers still as a part of the Jewish leadership and they're arguing about this, disputing about this.

He caused quite an uproar within the leadership of Israel there in Rome. Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him.

The point I'm making here is over there in Philippians, he said, and all the rest. Here's all the rest.

We have some of them named. They're primarily Jewish leaders. Leadership there in Rome.

And the Bible suggests that there were many. They packed out the house. Do you hear what Paul had to say? And Paul took the Scripture and he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And some of them believed. Some of them did not believe. It caused quite an uproar in the city. And for two years he did that. And there were many, many other visitors who came.

[32 : 25] Probably more of the leadership came back. Maybe some of those who believed came back to hear more of what Paul had to say as he taught them and disciplined them. And they brought their friends, their unbelieving friends, to hear what Paul had to say.

And over and over again for two years solid, Paul preached the gospel to not only the guard he was attached to day in and day out, but to all the others who came to his house, he preached the gospel and many of them were saved.

And like verse 31, preaching, this is what Paul did for the two years, possibly the last two years of his life, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence and lost none of his confidence, even though he's in prison, no one forbidding him.

That's how the book of Acts ends. Actually, in the Greek, it's the word unhinderedly. And that fits very well with Paul, with what Paul is saying here to the Philippians.

Unhinderedly, that is the advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, accomplished in many different ways, many different contexts, but accomplished here in a great way through Paul's imprisonment, through persecution.

[33 : 52] And Paul was absolutely overjoyed all these people who were saved. And what did they take note of according to what Paul said?

What did they see in Paul? They saw, believe it or not, that Paul was not a prisoner of Rome. Not really. Paul was a prisoner of Christ.

Would to God that when we endure persecution, probably, maybe never it will manifest itself in the form of prison.

But when we endure persecution, when we are insulted for the cause of Christ, when we are persecuted and suffer because we're walking righteously, that all those would see, who look at our lives, would see that we are prisoners of Christ.

That our chains are in Christ. What a witness, what a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul said.

[35:02] He said, it has become evident to them. That is to the palace guards and to all the rest who have come to see me. It's evident.

They may not believe me, may not believe the gospel, they may still hate me, but one thing is evident. One thing they know is true. He said that my chains are in Christ.

Paul mentions a third group of people. Not only the palace guard, these Gentiles, and not only these Jewish leaders who came by, but there's a fourth, a third group. Verse 14.

And most of the brethren in the Lord, there's the third group of people, that contributed to the advance of the gospel primarily because Paul was in prison.

The brethren of the Lord. What does he say about them? Having become confident or emboldened? By what? My chains.

[36:05] My imprisonment. What about them? They're much more bold to speak the word without fear. That is, without fear of reprisal, fear of persecution.

They're going to be persecuted, but they don't fear it anymore. Because Paul's in prison. Because of Paul. They're emboldened. They are confident to preach the gospel and witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ without any fear.

Now, Paul mentions then two groups of these brethren in the Lord. Two groups with two very different motivations. Verse 15.

Some, some of these brethren in the Lord, some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife. Out of envy and strife. They were envious of Paul.

And they made no bones about it. In fact, they vocalized their envy and strife and hostility toward Paul. They did so from the pulpit. And everywhere they went.

[37:16] See, Paul had his detractors. Now, they were not heretics. Don't get the idea he's talking about some heretics in the church. They were not preaching false doctrines.

They, Paul just simply refers to them as brothers in the Lord. So, they're believers. Orthodox in their faith. But they have one big problem.

One big sin. They're envious of Paul. Envious of him. I don't know what they were envious about. Paul doesn't give us any details. I think probably they were envious of his popularity as a preacher. As a minister. Maybe envious of his great success in ministry. Maybe they were envious of the number of converts that Paul saw in his ministry.

Maybe they were envious of Paul's boldness and his ability to proclaim the gospel without any fear.

[38:23] Maybe his boldness. I don't know what it was. I'd admit to you that preachers can think this way about another fellow preacher. Sadly.

And I would say the churches can think this way about another sister church, too. Be envious of them. You ever felt that way? You don't have to raise your hand.

Envious. But it went a step further because envy always leads to some form of hostility. They were hostile toward Paul. Hostile.

But Paul said this about these people. He said they preached Christ from selfish ambition. The word there is a word that is very interesting, especially in light of the fact that we're in an election year. Selfish ambition is one word in the Greek text, and we could translate it electioneering. You know what that means? Have an idea of what that might look like?

[39:32] Someone who's electioneering. Think of a politician, and it's a word that refers to them. Electioneering. That is, they were politicking. That's what these people were doing in the church because they envied Paul and they were hostile toward Paul, but their whole ministry could be summed up this way.

Though they were not preaching the wrong thing, they were preaching from the wrong motivation. They were politicking. And so like many politicians today, these preachers in Paul's day were not

interested in the kingdom, really.

They were not interested in the church, per se, and the health and growth of the church. They were not really very interested in the advancing of the gospel. They were only interested in one thing. Themselves. Their popularity. Their success. Their ministry. There were also some, he said, who were preaching, but they were preaching from goodwill.

Verse 17, Out of love for Paul, knowing that Paul was imprisoned by the will of God. That's not what Scripture says, but this is what they know. They preach out of goodwill, out of love.

[40:46] They knew something about Paul, that he was in prison, yes, but he was there because it was the will of God. It wasn't a bad thing. It was a good thing. They knew that. And this is what they knew about Paul.

He was appointed for the defense of the gospel, and that's what God was going to do through Paul no matter where he was. In prison or wherever. So you have those two groups of people, two different motivations, all preaching the gospel, and so what is Paul's conclusion?

He says, What then? What then? Only that in every way. Every one of these ways. Whether in pretense or in truth.

Wrong motivation, right motivation. Whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached. Christ is preached. And that is supreme. And he goes on, And in this I rejoice.

I'm rejoicing in those who were hostile toward him or were his detractors. He's not rejoicing in them. But he's rejoicing in the fact that the gospel is preached.

[41:58] There is the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He says, In this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice and rejoice and rejoice. Here's one of the amazing truths about the gospel.

Have you noticed? That it has power regardless of who preaches it. It has power regardless of who preaches it.

Because, you know, the power is not in the preacher. I believe God does anoint a preacher and gives him unction power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel.

But the power of the gospel to save is not in the preacher. It is in the gospel. Paul said in Romans 1.16, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God and to salvation to all who believe.

So Paul rejoiced in persecution for the gospel of Christ is advanced by it. I'm going to have to hurry on. Rejoice in persecution, number two, for the glory of Christ is affirmed by it.

[43:10] The glory of Christ is affirmed by it. It's affirmed by it through persecution. Paul said in verse 19, For I know... He says know a lot, by the way.

I know you know. This is a little different word. It's oida in the Greek, and it means to know something with conviction. Certainty. He says, I know that this...

What's this? His persecution. In the form of imprisonment. I know that this will turn out for my deliverance.

That's the word in the New King James. Salvation in some other translations. And that's probably a better translation because the word deliverance is the word soteria.

It's salvation. The word for salvation. And so Paul is referring to his salvation. I know that this, my persecution, my imprisonment, is going to work out, turn out for my salvation.

[44:13] So what is he saying? That because he's in prison, he's going to be saved. No, this is salvation in the future tense. That is salvation in the ultimate sense.

Remember, he said in Romans 13, 11, your salvation is closer than ever before. He's not talking about the beginning of salvation. He's talking about the ultimate end of salvation. There's salvation in past, present, and future tense.

We covered that ground a few weeks ago. And it's the future that Paul is referring to here. And so he is saying that everything that was happening to him at the present, really he's saying everything that happens to me, is God working, God working, His salvation to its ultimate end.

Remember what he said in Romans, or excuse me, Philippians chapter 1, verse 6. Be confident, being confident in this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ.

Paul believed that heart and soul. That what God started, He was going to finish, and He's talking about the finish line here. And He's saying that this is all going to ultimately work for God's ultimate salvation.

[45:31] God's going to complete it. And how could He be so confident in that? Because, number one, verse 19, He had the prayers of God's people. And so His imprisonment, He was not going to complain.

He was not going to be defeated. He was not going to complain against God. He was not going to get down in the doldrums. He's going to live in victory. And in His imprisonment, He's going to continue to faithfully preach God's Word.

And how did He know He was going to be able to do that? Because God's people were praying for Him. That's how we ought to pray for those all around the world who are either in prison or under tremendous persecution.

We ought to pray not so much that God would get them out of their persecution, though I think that's an okay prayer, but we ought to pray that in their persecution that they would remain strong and faithful and deliberate in their preaching of the Gospel without fear.

That's what we ought to pray. And He's saying, you're praying for me in this. And so I know that God's design in all of this is going to work out for my ultimate salvation because you're praying for me.

[46:41] And also, not only that, but because of the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. That is, I'm going to have everything I need, the power I need, the strength I need, because the Holy Spirit of God is with me and He is supplying all that I need even here in the midst of my persecution.

And so I'm going to stand strong. Strong in the faith and strong in the ministry of the Gospel. So He's got the prayers of God's people. He's got the supply of the Holy Spirit.

And He has another thing. He has hope. According, He says, to my earnest expectation and hope. He has His hope. He has His faith. And what are these things working toward?

He tells us that in nothing, nothing I shall be ashamed. I shall not do anything here in this prison, locked chain and key to this soldier, this guard.

I'm not going to do anything that would bring any shame to the faith. Nothing. Nothing I would say, nothing I would do in response to my persecution would be shameful to Christ.

[48:01] We ought to desire and hope in the same thing in our lives when we're persecuted. that we would respond in the right way.

Faithful to the end if it leads to that. But also, with all boldness as always, He says, with all boldness, as always, Paul was very bold, always was, even when he was not in prison.

And now also, now that I'm in prison, be bold. And this is what he desired. that Christ will be magnified in my body.

That ought to be our desire. Whether we're in prison or not, that Christ, His glory, His greatness, would be magnified that in my life, no matter what's happening in my life, even under intense persecution, that my life would be like a giant magnifying glass.

And that Christ in me would be magnified to the world around me. That was His desire. That Christ would be magnified in my body, He said, whether by life or by death.

[49:29] life. And when He said life, He didn't just simply mean if I get out of here, my ongoing life, He's talking about my life of persecution, whether it just simply is persecution or by my death.

Martyrdom. Either way. Because He said, for me, to live is Christ and to die gain.

That is, for me, the only reason for life is Christ. Do you feel that way? The only reason to live is Christ and to die is gain.

So, rejoice in persecution for the glory of Christ is affirmed by it. And then one more very quickly. Rejoice in persecution for the growth of Christ's church is accomplished by it.

Verse 22, but if I live on in the flesh that is in this body alive, if I live on alive here, this will mean something.

[50:50] It will mean fruit from my labor. Fruit. Fruit that is fruit for the kingdom. If I live on, it will be fruit and more fruit as God graciously bears it in my life.

Yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. I don't think it simply means that Paul couldn't make up his mind about it. That somehow he had the power of choice to live or die.

It meant that he just simply didn't know what God's will was yet. He's in prison. He may die, but he doesn't know. But it didn't matter.

And just speaking personally, you know, if I had the choice, I can't tell you what it would be. Number one, I don't know what God's will is. Number two, I really don't choose these things.

But he goes on to say, for I'm hard pressed between the two, living or dying, because I have a desire.

[51:58] I have a desire to depart. I think, you know, if I was the Apostle Paul, whipped as many times as he was, stoned, imprisoned, left for dead so many times, shipwrecked, all these things, and now here, prison, chained to a guard, I think maybe I'd, I'd say, you know, I think I'd like to go on.

He said, I'm hard pressed. I have a desire, honestly, a desire to depart and be with Christ. I think to some degree we all ought to feel that way as believers.

Which is far better, he said, nevertheless, to remain in the flesh, and here is the crux of the matter, to remain here alive is more needful for you.

It's more needful for you. That's the source of Paul's great joy. Growth of the church, the benefit of the church.

It's more needful for you in verse 25 in being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress. Progress.

[53:14] Your progress. Same word we had there in verse 12. of furtherance or advance. Talking about the advancing, that they would advance towards spiritual maturity and do so in spite of obstacles.

And the joy of or in faith. This is what I desire. This is what brings me great joy. Your progress. Your joy of faith. So you see, rejoice in persecution. For the gospel of Christ is advanced by it. It always has. Advanced through persecution. One of the reasons why I think we don't see the advancement of the kingdom in America as we once did.

And see it more readily in those countries where believers are under intense persecution. Rejoice in persecution for the glory of Christ is affirmed by it.

[54:21] And rejoice in persecution for the growth of Christ's church is accomplished by it. As we rejoice. Paul said, you're rejoicing in me.

But my desire is that you rejoice more abundantly in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. Do you see the joy of Paul's life?

Not any of us very likely will ever find ourselves in a place where Paul found himself here. There may come a day when in America they would put believers and preachers of the gospel in prison. They may come, maybe even in our lifetime. Are you ready for that? And yet, what about the persecution we can, and I would even say should, experience here now?

How are you responding to it? How do you look at it? What is your perspective on persecution? Is it Paul's?

[55:35] that actually persecution brings you great joy because of all that it accomplishes. And that's God's design.