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Sermon Notes

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Joy in the Journey

Philippians 1-4

Goal: Big-picture overview of Philippians

Purpose for writing: to thank the Philippians for their gift and to exhort them to growth in their faith

Circumstances: Paul is in prison for the gospel; the Philippians are also being persecuted for their faith; furthermore, there seem to be some disagreements and arguments among the people of the church

Paul's Goal: to lay before them the Christian life as a journey, personally and globally, and to teach them how they must have joy in that journey. He desires them to stand firm against enemies of their joy, to stand together in the cause of the gospel, and to make progress in their own salvation and in the global work of the gospel.

Joy in the Journey... until each one of them is perfect and until the world-wide work of the gospel is finished

Summary statement: Christ's perfect work on the cross will complete its perfect work in believers. Therefore the Philippians should joyfully stand firm against all attacks on the gospel, and joyfully stand together in the work of the gospel, making progress in the faith personally, and making progress for the faith globally.

Major assistance in the journey: Christ as our example, the church united in prayer, Paul (and others) as role models

II. Eight Major Themes in Philippians

A. The Inevitability and Immense Worth of Suffering for Christ (Philippians 1:12-30)

Paul speaks of his suffering in joyful terms, so that they may also be strengthened in their own sufferings

He speaks immediately of the benefits and blessings that have come from his imprisonment:

1:12-14 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.

He is also philosophical about the way his own personal enemies were willing to use the true gospel from false motives:

1:15-18 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,

He is gladly ready to die for Christ, so free from any anxiety about his own future:

1:18-21 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.

His motive in explaining all this to the Philippians is to strengthen them in their trials as well:

1:27-30 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved-- and that by God. 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

From all of this, we can gain two key insights: 1) Suffering for the gospel is inevitable 2) Suffering for the gospel is beneficial

1. Suffering is inevitable (for those who are faithful)
 - a. Christ's perfect example: dead on the Cross, exalted in heaven
 - i) imitation of Christ means joining Him in suffering

ii) “suffering servant” great paradox in Isaiah

iii) same downward path required today... if you would be exalted you must be humbled

b. Christ’s mission: advance through suffering

i) Christ’s grant: belief AND suffering... not just belief

vs. 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him

ii) so the gospel must make its advance through great suffering

c. Christ’s aggressive enemies

i) persecutors: mentioned in 1:28

ii) false teachers: mentioned in 3:2

iii) worldly sensual tempters: mentioned in 3:18-19

3:18-19 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

These earthly opponents of the cross of Christ will guarantee that advance of the gospel only comes as a result of suffering. Suffering is INEVITABLE

But... suffering is also BENEFICIAL...

2. Suffering is beneficial

a. suffering encourages others to preach the gospel

b. suffering produces marvelous fruit... people who come to faith

c. BEST OF ALL: suffering means fellowship with Christ... both in humiliation and in glorification

3:10 the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death

Suffering frees us from earthly fears and worldly ambitions... it makes us like Christ and helps rapidly advance the gospel

So, suffering is beneficial, and that’s why Paul rejoices!

B. The Purpose of Earthly Life and the Superiority of Heavenly Life (Philippians 1:20-26)

1:20-26 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.

1. “To live is Christ” The Purpose of Earthly Life—Becoming Like Him in His Death...
“Fruitful labor for me”

- a. I personally would rather be in heaven...

vs. 23 “I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far”

- b. it’s better for you if I continue to serve on earth

- c. “I am torn between the two”... incredibly Christ-like attitude!!!

- d. Philippians 2: Christ felt it was better for us if He left the glory and comforts of heaven and came to earth

- e. Paul felt it was better for them if he stayed on earth, suffering and serving

- f. to learn how to die, and in this way to be fruitful

2. “To die is gain” The Superiority of Heavenly Life

- a. “gain” is blasphemous if its not more of Christ we gain

- b. “better by far”... infinitely superior to die

- c. gives amazing courage for fruitful earthly life... but the best is just to be with Christ

- d. perfect face-to-face fellowship with Christ

- e. “resurrection from the dead”: perfection of soul and body

Summary: Philippians gives us a clear insight into the purpose of earthly life... namely to produce fruitful labor for the benefit of the body of Christ and to learn how to die to selfishness and live for Christ, even if it means great earthly suffering.

C. The Role of a United Church: Advance of the Gospel Cannot Be Done in Isolation, or by a Divided Church (Philippians 2:1-4)

The advance of the gospel CANNOT be done in isolation! Even the mighty Apostle Paul needed the support of the Philippian Christians to complete his mission.

1. The Partnership of the Philippians with Paul

Philippians 1:5 your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now

- a. material support: gift of money sent through Epaphroditus
- b. prayer support: constantly praying for Paul during his imprisonment
- c. support during suffering and persecution: standing by his side in the cause of the gospel

Philippians 1:7 ...whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

If even Paul needed other Christians, how much more did the Philippian church need each other

2. Philippians themselves facing great opposition

vs. 30 you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

3. Therefore, unity is absolutely essential... standing as one man

1:27-28 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved-- and that by God.

Philippians 2:2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

4. The problem was... there were arguments and dissensions among them:

2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

2:14 Do everything without complaining or arguing

4:2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.

The gospel of Christ cannot advance in such a hostile setting without cooperation... fellowship and mutual support in each other's ministries

Discord and arguments stem from selfishness and must be stamped out by faith and by imitating Christ's example

D. The Perfect Servanthood of Christ Will Conquer the World (Philippians 2:5-11)

2:5-11 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1. The World's pattern: "excelsior"...ever higher, ever better, ever more famous... selfishness rules
2. Christ's humility: "ever lower"... down, down, down; having everything, gave it up completely for us
3. Christ's glory: exalted to the highest place... every knee will bow before His glory will be complete
4. Same principle for us... to go up, we must go down

This is the theological center of this letter... the accomplishment of Christ on the cross, the world-wide destiny of worship for the believers, and of conquest for the rebels

This Christ is so captivating, He is worth knowing as the treasure of your life, even if it means suffering

Thus Christ also is the perfect role model for us...

E. Role Models: Essential in the Journey to Perfection (Philippians 2, 3:17, 4:9)

Christ is the central role model in the Christian life:

2:5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

But Paul also holds Timothy and Epaphroditus up as well:

2:21-22 *For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*

2:29-30 *Welcome [Epaphroditus] in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.*

Timothy is held up as a role model because of his faithful service in the gospel

Epaphroditus is held up also as a role model, when Paul says “Honor men like him...”; what Paul honors is his willingness to risk his life for the work of Christ

Even more... Paul presents himself as a role model:

3:17 *Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.*

1. Paul speaks of a patterned Christian life... a way of living that is maximally fruitful and pleasing to God
2. This pattern of life can be observed and imitated
3. It has a doctrinal foundation, but it is also extremely practical:

4:9 *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

4. Thus Paul believes the healthy Christian life is both caught and taught... both learned from books and learned in everyday life through imitation
5. It is as practical as “Watch me live; watch me pray, watch me eat, watch me handle money, watch me use my hours wisely, watch how I do my job, watch how I study the Bible, watch how I treat my wife, watch how I train my children, watch how I deal with persecuting oppressors...
6. The ultimate role model is Christ, and that role modeling was a major purpose of the incarnation
7. But in this epistle, Paul himself is a role model, as are Timothy and Epaphroditus, and unnamed other people whose lives are worth imitating

F. Salvation Must be Worked Out, But Perfection Is Guaranteed (Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13, 3:1-16)

1. Salvation is not a matter of putting together a wonderful resume of good works and personal achievements

3:3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—

3:9 not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

2. We are already “perfect” positionally in Christ...

3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

3. Christ however has begun a good work in us... and it must be perfected until the Day of Christ Jesus

1:6 he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

4. Salvation is thus a process... a journey to be traveled, a race to be run, a work to be completed

2:12-13 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

5. This work must be carried on with fear and trembling on one hand, but with joyful confidence in final perfection in the other... knowing that every striving we have for perfection in Christ has already been worked in us by God
6. There is a “pressing”—pressing after perfection in Christ—which is central to the Christian life here on earth

3:13-14 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

7. Central to that “pressing” is a burning desire to know Christ and a consistent desire to obey Christ... yearning for Christ and for obeying Christ fuels the journey

G. One Single Burning Passion: To Know Christ in Everything and Forever (Philippians 3:7-16)

3:10-11 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

1. The essence of eternal life is KNOWING GOD... knowing Him the way that Christ knows His own Father and the way the Father knows the Son
2. Intimate, secure, passionate, permanent love relationship
3. Paul says it is worth everything to him... worth more than anything in the universe. Worth more than his best resume, worth more than earthly comforts, even worth suffering and dying for
4. To know Christ in His suffering, and to know Him in His resurrection glory... this is the "one thing I do..."
5. This is the pearl of great price, the treasure hidden in the field... worth selling everything to have
6. If this passion is not in you and growing, you are not a Christian
7. Perfect knowledge of Christ awaits heaven... "To live is Christ and to die is gain"

H. The Secret of Christian Contentment and Joy in the Journey (Philippians 4:1-19)

1. Philippians has been called the Epistle of Joy
2. Joy in the journey is essential to maximum fruitfulness and witness
3. Related to confidence, encouragement
4. Secrets: Jeremiah Burroughs's "The Rare Jewell of Christian Contentment"

4:11-13 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

5. Factors:

- a. consistent prayer life:
 - i) praying for advance of the gospel (gets eyes off self)
 - ii) entrusting anxiety-causing problems to God
 - iii) cultivating thankfulness
- b. proper mindset... controlling the thoughts
- c. daily life obedience...putting sin to death
- d. character: gentleness

III. Summary

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