

Philippians 1 - God Uses Negative Circumstances to Bring About Positive Results

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I. Introduction (Phil 1:1-11)

(1) Salutation (v1-2)

(A) Senders: Paul and Timothy (1:1a)

(B) Recipients: Philippians (1:1b)

1 Paul and **Timothy, bond-servants** of Christ Jesus, To all the **saints in Christ Jesus** who are in Philippi, including the **overseers** and **deacons**:

1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

1 From: Paul and Timothy, servants of the Messiah Jesus. To: All the holy ones in Philippi, along with their overseers and ministers, who are in union with the Messiah Jesus.

1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

- Philippians was the fourth of four epistles Paul wrote during his first imprisonment in Rome (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, then Philippians)

- His house arrest in Rome is described in Acts 28:16-31

- It was a time in Paul's life where he didn't have freedom; he was overseen by a Roman guard, although he was allowed to see visitors who would come and go

- But it was still a time of adverse circumstances, the perfect time for Paul to pen this epistle to the church at Philippi about joy in the Christian life, especially during adverse circumstances

- Paul was actually walking out in his life the joy and contentment during adverse circumstances that he speaks of in this epistle during the time he is writing it

- "...Timothy" - was with Paul on his second missionary journey when Paul founded the church at Philippi

- "...bond-servants" - *doulos*, one who exists to execute the will of another

- "...saints in Christ Jesus" - Paul wrote this epistle to believers; it's a book about how to work out the middle tense of their salvation (sanctification)

- Philippians is not a book about how to get saved or stay saved; it's a book about how to grow in Christlikeness

- Paul heard about a deficiency in their Christian walk: the fact that they were not walking in joy. They were not role-modeling the life of Paul when he was with them and founded the church, nor the time he was imprisoned in a Philippian jail about 11 years earlier.

- Paul wrote to explain to the Philippian church how someone who is already saved can experience joy, even during adverse circumstances

- "...overseers" - *episkopos*, bishops

- "...deacons" - *diakonos*, servants

(C) Salutation of grace and peace (1:2)

2 Grace to you and **peace** from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
2 May grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be yours!
2 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.
- "...peace" - *eirēnē*, positional peace and practical peace; after we have been granted position peace with God (Rom 5:1), we are now able to have experiential peace
— It is experiential peace that is unpacked for us in Philippians (Cf. John 14:27)

(2) Thanksgiving (1:3-8)

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

3 I thank my God every time I remember you,

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

- "I thank" - Paul begins the epistle with thanksgiving and prayer (v9)

- "...my God" - possessive; Paul had a personal relationship with God; God was personal to him

- "...my remembrance of you" - Paul's memories of his visit to Philippi, about 11 years earlier, probably began by the river where he met Lydia, who heard what Paul said and responded to them (Acts 16:13-14)

4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,

4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,

4 always praying joyfully in every one of my prayers for all of you

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

- Paul was so thankful for this church that he allowed his attitude of thankfulness to move him to pray for them

- "...always" - constant, consistent prayer characterized Paul's life (Cf. 1 Thess 5:17)

- "...offering prayer" - we no longer offer animal sacrifices since Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice on the cross

— Now, we offer other types of sacrifices:

1. Our bodies (Rom 12:1)

2. Praise (Heb 13:15)

3. Good works (Phil 2:17)

4. Financial giving (Heb 13:16)

5. Prayer (Phil 1:4)

- "...joy" - the main topic of this epistle: how a Christian can experience joy under any circumstance

— Joy is not walking around with a plastic smile on your face, denying reality when you're hurting. It is a sense of peace and tranquility, a sense that all is well, when all hell is breaking loose in your life.

— Joy is something that all believers are entitled to experience as part of our birthright in Christ

- "...every prayer" - implies that prayer is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor; there are different types of prayers for different situations/circumstances (Cf. James 5:13-14)

- "...you all" - when Paul prayed for the church at Philippi, he prayed for everyone, including those who irritated or frustrated him (Cf. 4:2-3)

5 in view of your **participation** in the gospel **from the first day until now**.

5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

- "...participation" - *koinōnia*, fellowship; the Philippians were consistently ("from the first day until now") participating in Paul's ministry over the past 11 years since Paul founded that church

- "...from the first day until now" - the Philippian church got behind Paul's ministry and supported him. How they did this is explained in v7-8 (Cf. 4:16).

6 *For I am* confident of this very thing, that **He who began** a **goodwork** among you **will complete it** by **theday of Christ Jesus**.

6 *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

6 I am convinced of this, that the one who began a good action among you will bring it to completion by the Day of the Messiah Jesus.

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

- The narrow interpretation of this verse, in the context of financial giving, is that Paul is urging the Philippians to continue their financial support. That what they started doing "from the first day until now" would continue on into the future.

— This view is probably true, but the scope of what Paul is talking about here and what God will do to "complete His work" is much broader than simply continued financial support

- "...He who began" - God began the work in them, and will continue His work of grace in them until the consummation at the day of Christ Jesus (the day when Christ returns)

— When we talk about joy in the Christian life, the primary thing that prevent joy in our life is if we think that God can rip the carpet out from under us any time we mess up

- "...good work" - see notes from Thomas Constable below
- "...will complete it" - our glorification
- "...the day of Christ Jesus" - the Rapture
- There are 18 references to this "day" in the NT: Rom 13:12; 1 Cor 1:8; 3:13; 5:5; 15:51; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6,10; 2:16; 3:11,20-21; 1 Thess 4:17; 5:2,4; 2 Thess 1:10; 2 Tim 1:12,18; 4:8
- This expression is similar to "the Day of the Lord" (1 Thess 5:2) and the OT "Day of Jehovah" (Amos 5:18-20). However, the contrast to the OT emphasis on judgment, "the day of Jesus Christ" always refers to the NT church.
- It will be the time when Christ returns for His church, salvation is finally completed, and believers' works are examined and the believer rewarded
- This is one of the three great passages which focus on our security in Christ, and one of the most comforting verses in the Bible for Christians (John 10:27-28; Rom 8:38-39; Cf. Ps 138:8; Jer 31:3; 2 Cor 4:8-9,14; Heb 10:14)
- Our getting to heaven safely does not depend on us or on our ability to hold on and to persevere faithfully to the end of our lives...the Lord will see to it that we reach heaven safely in spite of our failures and shortcomings

What was the 'good work' to which Paul referred? If he had in mind only the generosity of his original readers, he may have meant that good work. However, as I have suggested, he seems to have had a much broader concept in mind, namely, what the work of the gospel produces: salvation.... In the New Testament, God has revealed that salvation is a process. It involves justification, when a sinner trusts Christ as his or her Savior. It also includes progressive sanctification, that occurs continuously from the time of justification until the Christian's death or the Rapture. And it culminates in glorification, when the redeemed sinner finally sees Jesus Christ and experiences transformation into His image. Paul was confident that, just as surely as God had justified the Philippians, He would also continue to sanctify, and eventually glorify, them. Whereas we have a hand in the process of sanctification, and can affect it by our obedience or disobedience, God alone justifies us. Regardless of our carnality or spirituality, He will also glorify us (1 Cor 15:1-7). [Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Philippians, www.soniclight.com.]

7 For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my **imprisonment** and in the **defense** and confirmation of the gospel, you all are **partakers** of grace with me.

7 For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.

7 For it is only right for me to think this way about all of you, because you're constantly on my mind. Both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, all of you are partners with me in this privilege.

7 Even as it meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

- "...imprisonment" - referring to his current situation, under house arrest in Rome (for 2 years), awaiting his trial before Caesar

- "...defense" - *apologia*, not many people could defend the gospel, particularly to the Jews, like Paul did

- Paul tells this church that they participated with him in his defense of the gospel

- "...partakers" - *koinōnia*, fellowship or partner; the Philippian church supported Paul and his ministry. They didn't just support his ministry through prayer, through adoration and affection, but also financial giving.

- After he left Philippi and traveled to Thessalonica, they sent him financial gifts on multiple occasions (4:16)

- It appears as if the Philippian church shined in this area of financial support much more so than all of the other churches that Paul founded and ministered to

- So the financial giving of the Philippians to Paul was not a gift to Paul, but a gift through Paul. Paul says that because they supported him financially, they were participating in his imprisonment and in his defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Paul is outlining here a completely different perspective on financial giving. When we give to a ministry, we are not just giving to that ministry, we are giving through that ministry. Whatever that ministry is doing, that I may not be part of directly, I am actually participating in that ministry because I am financially supporting it.

8 For God is my witness, how **I long for you all** with the affection of Christ Jesus.

8 For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

8 For God is my witness how much I long for all of you with the compassion that the Messiah Jesus provides.

8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

- "...I long for you all" - Paul saw the Philippians as co-laborers with him for Jesus Christ because of their financial and prayer support, on numerous occasions, for his ministry

The opposite of Paul's point here is true also: if by financially supporting a ministry who correctly and properly preaches the gospel, we are not giving "to" them but "through"

them, then if we financially support a ministry that does not preach the true gospel, a false

teacher or a ministry whose doctrine is suspect, we do the same thing, but not for the positive side of things, but the negative.

John addresses this negative side of things (financially supporting suspect ministries or false teachers) in 2 John 7-11. John's point in that passage is that because the principle of not through not to is reality, it can be done to support ministries that preach the true gospel, or it can be given to ministries that promote a false gospel. John warns us to first understand this principle (of giving through not to), then warns us to be aware of the message and mission of the ministries that we choose to support.

Christians need to exercise discernment in the area of giving because we can either be helping the cause of Christ, or tearing down the cause of Christ, based on our financial support. Think about an investment adviser and all the work they do to ensure that their client's money is invested to receive the highest return. If your investment advisor is not doing this, they are doing you a disservice. We need to think about our financial giving in the same way, know who we are giving to, know what the money is being used for, and most importantly know that the doctrine that they are preaching and promoting is correct.

(3) Prayer (1:9-11)

(A) Progressive sanctification (v9a)

(B) Knowledge (v9b)

(C) Discernment (v9c)

9 And this I pray, that your **love** may overflow still more and more in **realknowledge** and all **discernment**,

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,

9 And this is my prayer, that your love will keep on growing more and more with full knowledge and insight,

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment;

- Paul was thanking God for the Philippians in v3, now he's praying for them

- "...love" - *agapē*, always demonstrated in action; the first fruit of the Spirit

— Paul is praying that the love and grace that they have demonstrated in Christ would continue to grow and flourish (overflow)

- "...real knowledge" - *epignōsis*, correct knowledge; knowledge of God

— Knowledge in the Bible often speaks of intimacy (*ginōskō*); it's much more than facts and information, it's relational

- "...discernment" - *aisthēsis*, the insight to determine between right and wrong, good and bad, better and best

(D) Approve what is excellent (v10a)

(E) Favorable ruling at the Bema Seat (v10b)

10 so that you may **discover the things that are excellent**, that you may be sincere and **blameless** for **theday of Christ**;

10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

10 so that you may be able to choose what is best and be pure and blameless until the day when the Messiah returns,

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

- "...discover the things that are excellent" - Paul prays that the Philippians would not only develop the ability to distinguish between good and bad, but between better and best (Cf. 4:8)

— As Christians, we need to be able to distinguish between a good alternative, a better alternative, and the best alternative

- "...blameless" - they were already blameless positionally, but Paul wants them to be blameless practically, in their daily lives, in their moment-by-moment decisions and choices

- "...the day of Christ" - the Rapture (Cf. v6), which is immediately succeeded by the Bema Seat judgment of Christ where Jesus will judge the works of believers and reward them accordingly

(F) Fruit of the Spirit (v11)

11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, **for the glory and praise of God**.

11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus the Messiah so that God will be glorified and praised.

11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

- Paul is referring to the fruit of the Spirit, which Paul has already articulated to the Galatians (Gal 5:22-23)

— Paul wanted them to continue in the things they were already doing, knowing that God would bring their work to completion (v6)

- "...for the glory and praise of God" - the doxological purpose of God

— The fruit of righteousness that God bore through the Philippians ultimately glorifies God

II. Positive results of Paul's "negative" circumstances (Phil 1:12-30)

(1) Theme: Paul's "negative" circumstances brought positive results (1:12)

12 Now I want you to know, brothers *and sisters*, that my **circumstances** have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

12 Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has actually caused the gospel to advance.

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

- Paul learned to develop the mental discipline to see the glass half full instead of half empty, no matter what circumstance he was going through. Paul could always see the hand of God working, no matter what situation or circumstance he was in at the time.

- Because Paul could always see the hand of God, even in dire circumstances, he was never a prisoner to his circumstances. This allowed him to walk in the joy of the Lord no matter his circumstances.

- To see a glass half empty or half full is simply a matter of perspective, and it is fully within our control. A half empty glass can either be a positive thing or a negative thing, depending on how you approach it/look at it.

- For a believer to have a "glass half empty" perspective in life is for that believer to live beneath his privileges in Christ.

- "...circumstances" - Paul was under house arrest in Rome, in a rented apartment, and was guarded by a Roman centurion

- Previously he had endured a false arrest in Jerusalem, accused of a crime he did not commit because the Jews hated him and his message so much. He was jailed, tried, and appealed to Caesar for a trial because of his Roman citizenship.

- He endured a rough sea trip from Israel to Rome, huge storms, being shipwrecked, nearly losing his life multiple times, only to get to Rome and have to wait 2 years under house arrest before getting his trial before Caesar (Acts 28:30). And, he was under arrest based on a lie (false charges).

- So after enduring all of this, late in his two-year house arrest and shortly before his trial before Caesar, Paul says, Don't shed any tears for me because everything that has happened to me, God is working positive things out according to His will. God is accomplishing things right now through my negative circumstances that He would not be able to accomplish without my negative circumstances.

- Paul will now describe four things that he could see the Lord doing through his (negative) circumstances, not *in spite* of his imprisonment but *because* of his imprisonment:

- Captive audience (v12-13)
- Church's boldness in preaching (v14-18)
- Greater prayer (v19)
- Protection from martyrdom (v20-26)

(2) Evangelism of the palace guards (1:13)

13 so that my imprisonment in *the cause of* Christ has become well known throughout the **praetorian guard** and to **everyone else**,

13 so that my imprisonment in *the cause of* Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,

13 As a result, it has become clear to the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that I am in prison for preaching about the Messiah.

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*;

- Because of his imprisonment in Rome, he had evangelistic opportunities that he would have never had otherwise

— Paul's discipline of mind caused him to see the Praetorian Guard chained to him, not him chained to the guard (Cf. Acts 28:20)

- See, Paul's goal was always to get the gospel to Rome because he knew if the gospel made it to Rome, it would go everywhere from there

- "...praetorian guard" - the upper echelons of Roman government and society; Paul knew if they received Christ, they would have greater influence to spread the gospel to more people

- The church at Rome was started after Pentecost, when "visitors from Rome" (Acts 2:10) were part of the 3000 saved at Peter's sermon. Presumably after sitting under the apostles teaching for a period of time, they returned to Rome and started a church.

— This church was obviously in a key city, with much influence, but it was not started by an apostle. This is why Paul wanted to get to Rome so bad (Cf. Rom 1:11), so he could confirm their doctrinal integrity and strengthen the church in their faith.

— Paul knew that during his imprisonment in Rome he could evangelize, and that his opportunities to do so would even accelerate. That's what happened in Philippi, 11 years earlier, as the church was started first by Lydia when she was saved (Acts 16:14-15), then when the Philippian jailer and his family were saved (Acts 16:27-33).

- "...everyone else" - others in Rome, but because Paul's four prison epistles are in the canon of Scripture, this also includes every person since the time of Paul until today who has had an opportunity to read a Bible

(3) Boldness in evangelism (1:14-18)

(A) Greater boldness in evangelism(1:14)

14 and that most of the brothers *and sisters*, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

14 and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

14 Moreover, because of my imprisonment the Lord has caused most of the brothers to become confident to speak God's word more boldly and courageously than ever before.

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

- The Christians in Rome, and possibly other locations when they learned about Paul's imprisonment, thought that they needed to "pick up the slack" in their evangelism because Paul was sidelined.

- Paul's negative circumstances, a two-year house arrest, actually led to an expansion of the gospel being preached

(B) Mixed motives in preaching (1:15-17)

15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even **from envy and strife**, but some also from goodwill;

15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;

15 Some are preaching the Messiah because of jealousy and dissension, while others do so because of their good will.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

- Paul now talks about wrongly-motivated people, and opens up the door to the possibility that as a Christian, we can do or say the right thing with the wrong motive

- The Bible teaches that a doctrinally-sound, doctrinally established believer can proclaim the gospel with ill-motivated reasons

- We can do the right thing, in the right way, but for the wrong reasons. The Bible teaches this in many places.

- One example is Judas Iscariot: he wanted to sell the expensive perfume that Mary used to anoint Jesus and give the money to the poor. That's a good and right thing to do, but Judas wasn't concerned about the poor, he wanted to pilfer the money because he was the treasurer (John 12:6)

- "...from envy and strife" - other preachers/evangelists wanted to step into Paul's limelight while he was imprisoned, seeking to boost their own ministries and influence and build their own following

- They may have correct doctrinal, same as Paul, but they sought to take advantage of Paul's imprisonment to boost their own ministry, ego, and popularity

16 the latter *do it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;
16 the latter *do it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;
16 The latter are motivated by love, because they know that I have been appointed to defend the gospel.
16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 the former proclaim Christ out of **selfishambition** rather than from pure motives, thinking that they are causing me distress in my imprisonment.

17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

17 The former proclaim the Messiah because they are selfishly ambitious and insincere, thinking that they will stir up trouble for me during my imprisonment.

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

- "...selfish ambition" - the bottom line motive for some, to build their ministries while Paul was sidelined

— This same thing is prevalent today...many people can go online, on YouTube, do a podcast, post on Facebook, or X/Twitter, etc., and do so in order to increase their reach and popularity, to get "likes"

— They may or may not be preaching correct doctrine (most do not), but their seeking to do a good thing (spread the gospel) but for the wrong reasons/motives (envy and strife)

(C) Christ is preached (1:18)

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice. But *not only that*, I also will rejoice,

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

18 But so what? Just this—that in every way, whether by false or true motives, the Messiah is being proclaimed. Because of this, I rejoice and will continue to rejoice.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

- This shows Paul's true and right motive...he wasn't concerned one bit about those who were preaching the gospel to "take advantage" of the opportunity to build a following while Paul was imprisoned

— Paul's only motive was to preach the gospel; he didn't care how it was preached, what the motives were behind that preaching, whether envy and strife or selfish ambition...all he cared about and rejoiced over was that the gospel was being preached

- Note that Paul is not talking about people who are preaching a false gospel...that would be another issue entirely. These people are preaching a doctrinally-sound gospel, of which Paul would approve, but some were just doing so with wrong motives.

— We need to understand something about the gospel...the gospel is objectively true, no matter the motivations of those who preach it. In other words, the gospel, if presented accurately, does not rise or fall based on the motivations of the one preaching it (Cf. Rom 1:16).

— We need to understand that Satan himself could preach the gospel, and if done accurately, people could get saved. The power is not in the deliverer of the message, but in the message itself.

— Understanding this, it causes us to look at the preaching of some pastors or some churches and not to affirm their false teaching, but to understand that God can still use a partial presentation of the gospel to save people (1 Cor 4:5).

(4) Increase in prayer (1:19)

19 for I know that **this** will turn out for my **deliverance** through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

19 I know that this will result in my deliverance through your prayers and the help that comes from the Spirit of Jesus the Messiah.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

- "...this" - Paul is referring to his current incarceration and suffering

— It's always true that a believer's suffering or trials will increase his perceived need to pray and his actual engagement in prayer

— Because Paul was in prison, more people were praying for him than had ever prayed for him in the past

— Paul viewed the prayers of the Philippian church, to whom he's writing this letter, as the "provision of the Holy Spirit"

- "...deliverance" - *sōtēria*, often used to refer to salvation/justification, but the context here Paul uses it for rescue or deliverance from prison (Cf. Matt 24:13; Heb 11:7)

(5) Not dying and therefore assisting the church (1:20-26)

20 according to my eager expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

20 I rejoice because I eagerly expect and hope that I will have nothing to be ashamed of, because through my boldness the Messiah will be exalted through me, now as always, whether I live or die.

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

- If you read about Paul's third missionary journey as he goes through Philippi/Macedonia (Acts 20:1-3), we learn about a plot on Paul's life. There was a plot amongst the unbelieving Jews to assassinate/martyr Paul.

— So Paul, with his "glass half full" mental discipline, find yet another way to see the positive in a negative circumstance: as he was on house arrest, guarded by a Roman soldier, at least the plot of the Jews to martyr him can't be carried out.

— This is how Paul thought, this was the mental discipline he had. He knew, in any circumstance, if he was mindful and listening to what the Lord wanted to do, open to doing His will, he knew that something good would result (Rom 8:28).

21 For to me, to live is Christ, and **to die is gain**.

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

21 For to me, to go on living is the Messiah, and to die is gain.

21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

- Paul now talks about what it would mean for him to die, should this Jewish plot ever come to fruition after his release, versus what it would mean for him to live on

- "...to die is gain" - Paul says if I had to choose to live on, or be martyred by these unbelieving Jews, I'd choose martyrdom (2 Cor 5:8)

22 But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* **fruitfullabor** for me; and I do not know which to choose.

22 But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.

22 Now if I continue living, fruitful labor is the result, so I do not know which I would prefer.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

- "...fruitful labor" - because Paul was protected on house arrest, with a Roman guard, he would live on, which would allow him to write the prison epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians

— The evangelism Paul was able to do locally (he was allowed visitors during his house arrest), as well as trans-generationally with the writing of four of his epistles, was his "fruitful labor"

— So instead of looking at his prison sentence as a problem, Paul looked at it as something very positive because it's keeping him alive

23 But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;

23 But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;

23 Indeed, I cannot decide between the two. I have the desire to leave this life and be with the Messiah, for that is far better.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

- Paul wanted to do both, but if he had a choice, he would depart to be with Christ

— Paul never feared death; the fear of death is one of the reasons Jesus Christ came into the world (Cf. Heb 2:15)

— The world is afraid of death because they don't know what happens on the other side of death because they don't have the revelation of God

— If you have the full revelation of God, and you understand that "to live is Christ and to die is gain" and "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" what is there to be afraid of in death?

24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sakes.

24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

24 But for your sake it is better that I remain alive.

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you.

25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,

25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,

25 Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will continue to live and be with all of you, so you will mature in the faith and know joy in it.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

26 so that your pride in Christ Jesus may be abundant because of me by my coming to you again.

26 so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

26 Then your rejoicing in the Messiah Jesus will increase along with mine when I visit with you again.

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

(6) Application (1:27-30)

(A) Worthy conduct (1:27)

27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner **worthy** of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

27 The only thing that matters is that you continue to live as good citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of the Messiah. Then, whether I come to see you or whether I stay away, I may hear all about you—that you are standing firm in one spirit, struggling with one mind for the faith of the gospel,

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

- "...worthy" - Paul is exhorting the Philippians to allow their practice to be consistent with their position; how you live should be consistent with what has already said about us concerning our position in Christ

— When we are in a trial or suffering, we often will panic and say things we shouldn't say or do things we shouldn't do

— Paul says don't allow your adversity to detract you from what you are supposed to be doing, which is to live under God's power consistent with your calling

(B) Do not fear suffering (1:28-30)

(a) Sign of spiritual status of persecutor (1:28a)

(b) Sign of spiritual status of persecutee (1:28b-29)

28 and **in no way alarmed by your opponents**—which is **a sign of destruction for them**, but of salvation for you, and this *too*, from God.

28 in no way alarmed by *your* opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that *too*, from God.

28 and that you are not intimidated by your opponents in any way. This is evidence that they will be destroyed and that you will be saved—and all because of God.

28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

- "...in no way alarmed by *your* opponents" - when we come under persecution, it's easy to become frightened and afraid of man more than we are of God (Matt 10:28-31; Prov 29:25)

— The worst thing these people can do to you is take your life, and in that case, they may be doing you a favor

- "...a sign of destruction for them" - when Christians are threatened by the unsaved world, Paul says here that it's actually a sign that they are heading toward destruction

— Recall everyone heaping ridicule and scorn on Noah, who was building a huge ark in his driveway for 120 years, because the earth had never seen rain. The ridicule they hurled at Noah was a sign that they were about to be destroyed in the flood.

— This fact, when rightly understood, should cause us to feel sorry for our opponents or those who persecute us, since their very persecution is the sign of the impending destruction

29 For to you **it has been granted** for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer on His behalf,

29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

29 For you have been given the privilege for the Messiah's sake not only to believe in him but also to suffer for him.

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

- Paul explains that the Philippians belong to God, and what they are going through at the moment was a normal pattern: God has granted to you to believe on Him, but God has also granted to you to suffer for Him

- "...it has been granted" - *charizomai*, to "give graciously"; should be understood as "conveying a privilege." It comes from the root word *charis*, meaning grace.

— It is a "graciously granted privilege" that God allows a person to believe in Christ and to suffer for Him. God has granted people the opportunity, but it is the responsibility of the person to actually believe. God does not believe for us.

— Few Christians view suffering for their testimony as a blessing, but that is exactly what it is; it is one of God's tools to mold His children into vessels that bring glory to His Son (Cf. James 1:3-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7)

- Suffering even perfected the Lord Jesus (Heb 2:10)
- Calvinism uses this verse to bolster their belief that an unbeliever is so dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1) that they have no ability to believe. Thus, the "gift of faith" must be "granted" to them by God in order for them to come to faith in Christ.
- John MacArthur and John Piper both argue that this verse supports the idea that faith is a gift from God [MacArthur, *Faith Works*, p69]. However, the gift of faith is not the topic of this verse.
- Grammatically, "believe in Him" and "suffer on His behalf" are parallel in this verse, so if faith is a gift (as Calvinists believe) then so is suffering. But nowhere in Scripture are we told that suffering is a gift from God.
- In addition, both the "believing" and the "suffering" in this verse *are actions of people, not God*. Both verbs are in the active voice, meaning *the subject (man) is the doer or performer of the actions of believing and suffering*. It's just plain poor exegesis of the text, and a complete misunderstanding (or ignorance) of the Greek language, to believe that this verse argues in favor of God giving unbelievers the gift of faith in order for them to believe.
- Faith isn't a gift anymore than suffering is a gift. This verse states that man is the one who suffers, just like it is man who is the one who believes.
- What has been granted to you to believe is the convicting work of the Spirit, convicting a person of their need to believe (John 16:7-11). This "granting" is not just for some (the "elect") but for the entire world).
- "Suffer" (*paschō*) and "faith/belief" (*pisteuō*) are both present continuous, meaning that as suffering is introduced into a believer's life, God grants him faith to endure such suffering. Thus, this verse is not teaching that regeneration precedes faith, as taught by Calvinism/Reformed Theology.
- See notes on Eph 2:1,8; John 6:44; see Tag: **Faith As A Gift?**

(c) Paul's example of suffering (1:30)

- 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.
- 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.
- 30 You have the same struggle that you saw in me and now hear that I am still having.
- 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.
- Paul is saying that this normal pattern (see note on v29) you have seen in me (God granted Paul to believe, then God granted Paul to suffer for Him)
- Paul says this so that we would remember the "normalcy" in suffering because he has gone through the exact same thing (Acts 14:22; 2 Tim 3:12)