

### Same Mind, Same Love, Same Joy (Part 3)

Philippians 1:12-26

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To many, joy is the prominent theme of Philippians. However, as we read we see that the theme of change in our thinking and perspective is just as prominent, and that it's this change in perspective that enables us to have joy. Paul is trying to change the Philippians' minds, as we see in 2:1-2, where he urges them twice to share the same mind with each other, to have the same thinking as he has. And in 3:7-8 he uses the same verb three times to describe his thinking, the perspective that Jesus is far more important than anything else in this world. In today's passage, Paul again tries to change our thinking by telling us that our focus should be on the *progress* of the gospel. This idea is mentioned in 2:12 and 25, which form an *inclusio*, sandwiching the passage. This becomes clearer knowing that word "advance" in v. 12 is actually the same as "progress" in v. 25 in Greek. Paul's primary purpose and focus is the progress of the gospel, which is the message that Jesus is the Messiah, the King. This is a message we all need to hear, whether we are believers or not. Therefore we all must be concerned with the progress of the gospel. It's not just for missionaries, but for all of us, not just to tell people who never heard, but also to remind and encourage each other to acknowledge Jesus as King in our lives.

Focusing on the progress of the gospel in all circumstances has four results. First is that we put away personal differences. In vv. 15-18 Paul explains that while he's in prison some are motivated to preach the gospel out of love and a desire to do the work for which Paul suffers. But others are motivated by envy and rivalry. They see Paul's imprisonment as a chance to take the spotlight from him, to have their ministries overtake his in prominence. They preach out of insincere ambition and competitiveness. You get the sense that Paul knew these people personally and that there was real strife and enmity between them. Yet in v. 18 Paul says that he still rejoices because no matter what their motives, the gospel is still preached. Because of his focus on the progress of the gospel, Paul puts aside his personal differences. Our church isn't as homogenous as it appears. We have many people from different backgrounds with different perspectives, and it can cause offense and disagreements, which may take away our joy. But when we put the progress of the gospel first, we can set these differences aside and work together, being united in purpose.

The second result is that we keep our eyes on future vindication. In v. 19 Paul states that he is confident that he will be delivered. But what is this deliverance? From v. 20 it's clear Paul isn't certain whether he will live or die, even though he is certain of deliverance. This suggests this deliverance isn't temporal. When he speaks of deliverance, he is actually quoting Job 13:16, (from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament). Here Job expressed confidence in his future deliverance, before God had restored anything to him materially, which in itself wasn't even a complete deliverance from the grief of losing his family. Job wasn't expecting this deliverance to be material, and neither is Paul. The ultimate deliverance is in eternity. All of us need to spend more time thinking about eternity rather than temporal things. It's hard when our jobs require us to spend so much time thinking about the temporal, but we must learn to change our thinking and focus on the eternal.

The third result is that we gain a new perspective on living. In v. 21 Paul famously states that to live is Christ and to die is gain. We shouldn't live for ourselves, our careers, our grades, or our achievements. We may pursue these things, but we must not allow these to blind us to our ultimate focus, which is Jesus. In all these things we do, we should focus on Him. When I was in high school I prayed before each test that God would help me do as well as possible for His glory. Living for Christ means living in a way that brings Him glory. We are witnesses for the gospel both through word but also through our lives. In our workplaces we can be witnesses by working with sincerity, selflessness, diligence, honesty, humility, and integrity, rather than being deceptive, half-hearted, self-centered, ruthless, arrogant, or dishonest.

The final result is that we seek the benefit of others rather than ourselves. In vv. 22-26 Paul states that dying is better by far *for himself*, but living is more necessary for those he serves. For their sake, their progress in faith, and their joy, Paul remains. It's so that they boast in Jesus, which means they can have ample cause to glory and rejoice in Jesus' work in their lives. When we focus on the progress of the gospel, we put aside our personal differences, being confident in our eternal deliverance, living for Jesus and putting others before ourselves. Though these points are probably not new to most of us, let us humbly submit and allow God to change our thinking in this way.