

# Philippians 1.12–26

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## *Preaching with courage*

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Finding Joy in the Journey (2)

### **Never meet your heroes**

People say, ‘Never meet your heroes,’ don’t they? We look up to all sorts of different people, don’t we – sporting legends, music stars, maybe even politicians! Supposedly the people you look up to the most are disappointing when you finally meet them.

Has anyone ever met their hero? *Ask around the church.* What were they like, was it disappointing?

Paul was, in modern terms, a bit of a celebrity. He was famous among the early Christians. He travelled the length and breadth of the Roman Empire sharing the good news about Jesus. He started churches, performed miracles, preached powerfully. His exploits were well-known – including a prison break in Philippi.

But now, he was in prison again. And this time, there was no miraculous escape. Paul was shackled, his journeys over.

Did this mean he was wrong all along? You can see how the early Christians would be disheartened and fearful, if even their hero Paul could be kept in prison like anyone else. Paul knew his continuing imprisonment would knock the confidence of those early churches.

## **In every way... Christ is preached (12-18)**

So Paul tells them: the gospel cannot be held back. Please open your Bibles to page \_\_\_\_, Philippians 1, beginning at verse 12.

Paul says:

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

*Philippians 1.12 (NIV)*

Far from being stopped in its tracks by Paul's imprisonment, **the gospel** – the good news about Jesus Christ – continues **to advance**. Paul may have been a captive, but the soldiers ordered to guard him were *his* captive audience! He couldn't go anywhere, but then neither could they.

And, like modern police, they worked shift patterns and rotas – ensuring that Paul constantly had someone new to talk to.

And so, verse 13:

As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

*Philippians 1.13 (NIV)*

Even in prison, Paul was telling people about Jesus. People might have thought this was the end for Paul – but it isn't, not yet.

Now, you might not be chained to a Roman soldier – but who are the people God has given you to share your life with, to share your faith with? In some ways, it was easier for Paul in prison: they couldn't walk away and escape, any more than he could!

How many of you are watching the Olympics? It's difficult, isn't it, with so many of the main events starting at midnight. I watched Andy Murray's match the other day, and I managed to catch both the men's and women's cycling team pursuit finals. To be honest, it's probably a good thing the timings don't work so well, because I would be ever so tempted to sit and watch it all day!

After the Olympics, sports clubs and teams usually see a big bump in membership; because seeing our athletes do amazing things is inspiring. We know we could never match their achievements, but still, seeing what they can do, inspires us to give it a go.

And that's what happened in Rome. Look in verse 14:

And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

*Philippians 1.14 (NIV)*

The other Christians see Paul, they see him sharing his faith even with the soldiers guarding him in prison. They see the good news about Jesus spreading throughout the imperial guard, and that encourages them, it inspires them to give it a go themselves. They may never plant churches across the empire, just as it's fairly unlikely I will ever set an Olympic record or win a gold medal – but they can still share their faith with those around them.

I think sometimes when people hear the phrase 'preach the gospel' they think of Billy Graham, speaking to thousands of people in stadiums around the world. Or they think of a vicar, droning on at the front of church.

But preaching is so much more than that – *real*, everyday preaching is precisely that: how we live and work and talk about our faith among the people we see day to day. Paul didn't need to travel the world to share his faith, when there was someone right beside him.

Look in verse 18 with me:

The important thing is that in every way... Christ is preached.  
And because of this I rejoice.

*Philippians 1.18 (NIV)*

A phrase that you'll hear me say a lot is: we should follow Jesus, every day, in every way. It covers all the bases, and it's easy to remember: a Christian should follow Jesus, every day, in every way.

We preach Christ when we control our temper, when we refuse to gossip, when we show compassion, when we love selflessly, when we learn to be peaceful when all around is crashing down – and when we chat with other people about our faith, about why we come to church, about the difference Jesus makes in our life.

Christians follow Jesus every day, **in every way**. In other words, it isn't the spectacular, but normal people, and normal, everyday friendships that preach the good news about Jesus the loudest.

So Paul tells the Philippians (verse 18):

The important thing is that in every way... Christ is preached.  
And because of this I rejoice.

*Philippians 1.18 (NIV)*

## To live is Christ (19-26)

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know... what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

*Philippians 1.18a-19 (NIV)*

Paul rejoices when the good news about Jesus is preached. And he rejoices because, although he is **in chains**, he knows that he will be delivered.

People love rescue stories. Here is almost every film plot: you are introduced to the main characters, and then they get into some trouble, which the heroes manage to sort out before the end of the film. We love happy endings, when the prisoner is freed, the family reunited, the couple married, the baddie defeated.

But that's not what Paul means when he says **what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance** (19). He hopes that he might be set free, but what he *actually* means, is (verse 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 death.

*Philippians 1.20 (NIV)*

The **deliverance** Paul hopes for is not a miraculous escape from prison, but **deliverance** from shame and fear. Even Paul struggled with feeling afraid and ashamed, and knew he needed the support and prayers of others and the strength of God to carry on.

Does that encourage you? People say don't meet your heroes, because you'll discover that, underneath it all, they are just like you. But that's exactly what *does* inspire me about Paul. He was an normal guy, who found things difficult, but who did extraordinary things because of Jesus, at work in and through him. He knew that, whether he lived or died, *it's all about Jesus*. Verse 21:

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

*Philippians 1.21 (NIV)*

If I liked tattoos, I'd probably have that tattooed on my arm.

**To live is Christ.** I could preach on that all year. **To live is Christ:** he is our life. He died so we might have life, full and abundant life. He breathes his Spirit into us, so we can begin to truly *live*.

Are you missing something in your life? It's Jesus. If he is not at the heart of your life, then you are not truly alive. There's more to life than having a pulse.

One of my favourite bands put it like this:

A steering wheel doesn't mean you can drive  
A warm body doesn't mean I'm alive

*Switchfoot: Thrive*

There is more to life: **to live is Christ.**

**To live is Christ, and to die is gain.**

We are so used to hearing about death as 'loss' – 'I'm sorry for your loss,' we say. Because, when someone dies, we really do 'lose' them – they are *not* in the room next door, as people sometimes say.

But for Christians death is not loss, but gain – we gain Christ, face-to-face. We gain the prize Jesus won for us, and for which he is calling us to heaven: the prize is to be with him forever. For Christians death is not loss, but gain.

Notice that in verse 23 Paul says:

I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

*Philippians 1.23-24 (NIV)*

To **depart** would mean no more prison, no more beatings, no more betrayals, no more pain, no more anxiety, no more shame, no more fear – but Paul doesn't mention any of that. No, because the best thing he can imagine is to **be with Christ**.

**To live is Christ and to die is gain.**

So we could rephrase that: our life is a gift from Jesus, living it means following Jesus, and when we die, we see Jesus face to face. What a day that will be, what a moment, *finally* to see Jesus.

## **It's all about Him**

Folks: it's all about Jesus. Last week in our eleven verses we saw that Paul mentioned Jesus seven times. This week we have fifteen verses, and Paul mentions Jesus ten times. That's seventeen times in twenty-six verses.

Paul is obsessed – but in a good way, because he is obsessed with the one thing that matters above all other things: Jesus Christ. He doesn't care what happens to him, as long as through him, in life or in death, somehow, people get a glimpse of Jesus.

Giving people a glimpse of Jesus through us, is what it means to share our faith, and it gives Paul great joy.

Think about for a moment: if, somehow, even if *really* dimly, someone gets a glimpse of Jesus through you – how awesome is that?! Paul says elsewhere that Christians are treasure in jars of clay. We are the jars of clay, and Jesus is the treasure, shining out through the cracks.

And you know the funny thing? When we paper over the cracks, when we try to hide our pain, our own brokenness, trying to show the world that we have got it together – when we hide the cracks, we hide the treasure as well.

And that's why it takes courage to share our faith, to let the light of Jesus shine through the cracks: we want to hide our brokenness and our shame. But think about this: without being put in prison, without all that time on his hands, Paul doesn't write half as many letters, which have been part of the bedrock of the church for two thousand years. His broken jar; Christ's treasure within.

Today's theme is 'preaching with courage': finding joy in the journey is about being brave, sharing our faith in words and deeds, letting the treasure of Jesus within us shine through the cracks.

It isn't easy – so let's continue to pray for one another. Amen.