

Opening Words:

“This is what I live for,” says Paul, “this is my core value, my conviction.” What was Paul referring to? Listen today and you’ll find out!

14 Phil Paul’s Expectation and Hope

Paul, the man of humility, the man of faith, and the man of joy thought about the church in Rome. A smile spread across his face – the brothers and sisters were emboldened and taking the message of Christ to more and more people. He rejoiced at God’s sovereign wisdom and power and marveled how he was using Paul’s house arrest in Rome to give courage to the church. These things he wrote in his famous letter to the Philippians.

Paul also knew this multiplication of Gospel preaching was going to cause something else to happen. Paul knew he was going to be released from his confinement in Rome. Listen to him speak in 1:19-20.

¹⁹For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance. ²⁰For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die.

Paul expected to be delivered from prison. He believed this preaching of the gospel, this revival of courage, and the prayers that it would inspire would bring about his release from prison along with the mighty work of the Holy Spirit.

When Paul speaks of their prayers he doesn’t use the normal word for prayer but a word with greater intensity. In other places we sometimes translate it *supplication*. He used this word in 1 Timothy 2:1 when he said that entreaties and prayers (supplications), petitions and thanksgiving be made on behalf of all men.

Paul used this word in Romans 10:1 when he said about his people, “Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and *my prayer* to God is for the people of Israel to be saved.” It was more than a simple prayer. It was supplication. This is the word the writer of Hebrews used in 5:7 when he said that Christ offered up prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to his father. And this is the word Paul used earlier in the book when he said he always offered prayer with joy for them. It was supplication. It is also the word he will use in 4:6 when he will tell us to be anxious for nothing but in everything with prayer and supplication to let our requests be known to God.

What is supplication? Supplication in English is part of a family of words along with entreating, beseeching, and imploring that means to ask with great urgency because you are in a situation where the normal response would be a refusal or a reluctant yes. And the refusal or reluctance is

not on the part of God but is on the part of people. Here in Rome, the expected outcome would be refusal to release Paul. What was Paul to them? He was just a Jewish troublemaker and because a lot of the Jews didn't even like him, the Romans would have less reason to release him. They could do away with him and the empire, from their perspective, would be free of another troublemaker.

But supplication is prayer with great humility and emphasizes getting on one's knees and showing great earnestness. That's serious praying! This is the kind of praying Paul did for the Philippians and this is the kind of praying they did for him.

Paul was counting on something else – the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and this word is equally interesting and provides great insight. It is the word from which we get our English word chorus and choreography. In the ancient world, when the Greeks would have special festivals, they would have many singers (the chorus or choral group) and dancers with someone organizing the choreography. It would take a lot of money to provide these singers and dancers in order to make their festivals lavish and abundant. The giving of that money for such occasions became the word which we normally translate “provision or help” but it had the idea of lavish provision, lavish help.

When we use the word provision it can have the simple meaning of providing basic needs or abundant provision. If you come to my house for breakfast, I could set a box of cheap corn flakes before you for breakfast and I can say I have provided for you. Or, I could make my special Mexican eggs where I sauté onions, tomatoes, and green peppers, then mix in the eggs, and sprinkle shredded cheese on top – all this after I have fried up some bacon and toasted some good bread and set out different kinds of juice. That's a different kind of provision, abundant provision, and my wife loves it when I make that kind of breakfast on a Saturday morning.

Well, the word Paul uses here carries the idea for lavish abundant provision and he expresses his confidence in his deliverance from prison – in spite of all the opposition – because he knows the Philippians are supplicating God for him and he knows God will abundantly provide the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Many hundreds of years before, the prophets said that God would **pour out** the Spirit, not just in a trickle, but in a flood. Jesus said that from a person's innermost being, **rivers** of living water would flow. That is possible only if rivers of living water are flowing from the throne of God to us. And here Paul expects that the Holy Spirit will abundantly work to bring about his release. After all, he was seeing the Spirit of God work in abundant ways even during his imprisonment so that the Gospel was advancing miraculously into places where one would not expect – Caesar's household. Roman chains were no problem for God.

Let me pause here just for a moment and ask you to reflect with me. Are there situations in your life where you need to supplicate God? Where you need to get on your knees and with great earnestness and humility cry out to God. It could be for yourself. It could be for someone you love. Don't hesitate – get more intense in your prayers and see what God will do and remember that He is the abundant God and he will abundantly supply.

Paul believed he would be released for another reason. Paul had a conviction – a core value we might say – that shaped his every thought and action. It was the conviction that Christ would be exalted in his body whether by life or death.

Let's look at verse 20 again: Paul says, "I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die."

"This is what I live for," says Paul, "this is my core value, my conviction." Let's look at it more closely.

First, that I will never be ashamed. Paul was going to be on trial before the Romans and such an ordeal could easily cause shame or humiliation. But Paul would never allow such an ordeal to make him cower in fear which would diminish his testimony. I'm not saying Paul would be arrogant but his conviction was to stand boldly for Christ and let others know who Christ was rather than grovel in shame before the authorities

Second, his conviction was to bring honor to Christ. I was surprised as I checked this word to discover that it meant to enlarge, to amplify in an extraordinary degree. This was Paul's core value – he wanted to amplify Christ to the ears of people. He wanted to enlarge Christ before their eyes. You see, for some people Christ is small and insignificant and for others he is distant and irrelevant. Our job is to be like a microscope that enables small things to appear large or like a telescope that makes faraway objects appear close.

This was what Paul lived for – to enlarge and magnify Christ so that others would have to pay attention to him.

Third, Paul lived out these convictions in his body whether he lived or died. The first phase in Paul's hearing went well and he expected to be released, but Paul did not know everything and he still knew things could change and that the verdict could go against him and so he said, whether by life or by death I want Christ to be magnified. Whether I am a martyr or if I continue living – either way – I want to ensure that Christ is exalted in my body.

And this brings me to my last point today – the importance of our body. In the original language, Paul said, I want Christ to be exalted **in my body**. Just yesterday my wife was reading through 1 John and she came across those difficult verses that say if we don't do righteousness we are not of God and if we don't have love for our brothers and sisters we are not of God. We talked about them for a while and I explained that John was writing to an audience of Christians who were being threatened with the pagan philosophy and religion of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism, like much Greek philosophy and like eastern religion diminishes the importance of the body and anything physical. In John's ministry, and in Paul's to some extent, these people were saying, "it doesn't matter what you do with your body. Your soul is what is important and one day your soul will travel to heavenly spheres where you will live with the gods." Some took this philosophy and were saying, "Well, if that's true, then I can do as I please with my body. I can indulge forbidden pleasures because my body is not that important. I will live it up here on earth in

my body and one day my soul will be released to eternal pleasures in heavenly realms with the gods.”

John said, “Be careful! Don’t think this way! That is not how we taught you. The body is important and the true gospel affirms the importance of the physical part of God’s creation. Our destiny is to have a resurrection body and those who are saying that you can do as you please with your body are not of God.” John was not saying that we never sin but that we as Christians should be alert to those who teach that you can live as you please with your body.

Paul had this same conviction about the importance of the body. God made it and therefore it is good. Yes, sin has polluted it and one day the body will wear out and we will have to put it off, but our destiny is not to live forever as a disembodied spirit. Our destiny is resurrection and to live on a new physical earth that has been cleansed of sin.

This is what makes Christianity unique – Christianity has a physical dimension to it and Paul says “I consecrate my body to be used of God. If I am martyred, I want Christ to be exalted in my body’s death as I stand boldly for him. If I am released, I consecrate my body with all its abilities in his service.”

This is my earnest expectation. This is my hope. This is my conviction. This is my core value – I want Christ to be exalted, magnified, enlarged, and manifested to an extraordinary degree before the eyes and ears of others.