

# Joy of Life in the Face of Death

Thomas Robinson, *Lives Shaped by Jesus 2*, October 7, 2012

## Philippians 1:12-25

<sup>12</sup> I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that **what has happened to me** has really served for the progress of the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard (praetorium) and to all the rest that my imprisonment (bonds/chains) is in Christ/Messiah.

<sup>14</sup> And most of the brothers and sisters, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment (chains), are much more bold (daring) to speak the word without fear.

<sup>15</sup> Now some because of envy and rivalry and others because of good will are preaching the Messiah. <sup>16</sup> The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former publicly talk about the Messiah out of selfish strife, not sincerely but intending to stir up trouble for me in my imprisonment (chains).

<sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether with false motives or in truth, Christ/Messiah is publicly talked about, and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance/salvation through your entreaty and the provision the Spirit of Jesus Christ, <sup>20</sup> as is my eager expectation and hope – that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with all boldness now as always Christ/Messiah will be honored in my body, whether through life or through death.

<sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ/Messiah, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means for me a harvest requiring labor. Yet which I shall choose I am not telling.

<sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ/Messiah, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup> But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

<sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith <sup>26</sup> so that your pride in Messiah Jesus may overflow because of me till I am present with you again.

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## Acts 19:1, 8-10 Paul Comes to Ephesus, Capital of Roman Asia

<sup>1</sup> ... Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. ... <sup>8</sup> And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ... <sup>9</sup> He taught daily in the hall of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

## 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 Paul's Time of Danger in Asia/Ephesus

<sup>8</sup> For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly crushed beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

## Philippians 3:7-8a

<sup>7</sup> But whatever gains I had, I counted as loss for the sake of the Messiah. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of **knowing Messiah Jesus my Lord**.

## Galatians 2:20

<sup>20</sup> I have been **crucified with Christ**. It is no longer I who live, but **Christ who lives in me**. And the life **I now live in the flesh** I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God, who **loved me and gave himself** for me.

## The Gospel in the Turbulent World of the City

Philippians is probably written from Ephesus in A.D. 54. (Some suggest Caesarea or Rome.)

Readers have heard what's happened to Paul. Acts 19 describes Paul's 3 yrs in Ephesus – an ancient wealthy city, seaport, center of trade and intellectual life, Roman capital of Asia. Center of worship of Artemis and the rising worship of the Emperor.

Paul did extensive teaching in synagogue and public discussions. Sending out co-workers.

Varied religious encounters: Apollos, disciples of John the Baptist, Jews, renegade Jews, practitioners of magic, devotees of Artemis, Greek and Roman population.

Luke wants us to sense how complex the population was that encountered the Gospel:

Many were cynical or gullible, looking for something. Varied economic/religious interests.

Paul is a Roman Jew talking about an Anointed king and "Kingdom of God" – dangerous.

## Making Sense of What Happens

We don't know all that happened. Acts describes conflicts with other Jews and exorcists and burning magic books and rioting. Elsewhere Paul refers to a death sentence and fighting with beasts and enumerates beatings, imprisonments, shipwrecks not in Acts.

Paul goes into the impact of events here as he strives to help the Philippians learn how to think about such conflict, opposition, and punishment. People in a Roman colony usually had a positive view of Roman power, but they had also been transformed by the Gospel. Paul was imprisoned in Philippi, but delivered, and his Roman citizenship was recognized. In Ephesus, no immediate freedom nor protection by Roman citizenship. Even so, Paul showed that even prison could become a place of teaching and a cause of confidence.

Many Christians became more daring in fearlessly speaking the word, proclaiming the Messiah/King/Lord of the world. Others spoke of Jesus out of negative motives hoping to cause Paul more suffering. These have often been thought to be Christians who opposed Paul (as in Galatia). Perhaps more likely they're non-Christians who sense the threat of this Messiah/Lord and stir up opposition. For Paul even the negative talk is good. If devotees of the powerful Artemis feel threatened and attack Paul, many who never heard of Jesus may wonder about a message that could cause such a response.

## Thinking about Life and Death

But Paul knew very well that his opponents were not playing games. The chains were real; the swords were sharp; death was a real possibility. Paul wants the Philippians to see how he thinks about these things as Jesus has shaped him and is shaping them.

He is confident of deliverance/salvation (*soteria*). This will come through their prayer/entreaty for him that God will provide him the Spirit of Jesus. The deliverance, however, is from any shameful cowardice, so that Paul will speak boldly and magnify the Messiah through his body – whether that body stays alive in this world or is executed. Paul has no element of seeking death by using his body as a weapon against an enemy. He reaches out to his jailers as people loved by God not as enemies. Shaped by Jesus.

Life and death have really changed. To live is Christ (I share his crucifixion and life, Gal 2:20).

Because Christ is eternally alive with resurrection life, death's sting is gone. Fear gone. Physical death as end of troubles and being with Christ is clearly a good thing now.

But continued physical life also is good. For Paul, the work he loved so much. A harvest of people, relationships, progress in faith, etc. Even in chains, the choices are only good.