

December 16

Philippians 1-4

Philippians - first book I ever memorized. It is all about joy despite tough circumstances.

Paul is writing this letter from Rome where he has gone as a prisoner. Paul waits for his appeal to be heard and wonders what Caesar will do with him. He wants the saints at Philippi to keep on praying for him because it is through those prayers that he will be delivered.

Paul had the perspective that he absolutely could not lose. He is about to face Nero, not exactly known for justice emperor, but he has no fear because to him the outcome is in God's hands and it really doesn't matter -- he cannot lose. At one point, he says it out loud. "For me, to live is CHRIST and to die is GAIN." Win-win.

This is Paul's personal vision statement and the way he lived. Kill me... And I'll be w Jesus. Let me live and it is all about Jesus. Life is Jesus.

Even in prison it is apparent from these paragraphs that Paul is all about Jesus. He has got guards chained p to him 4 hours a day each. And Paul tells them all about Jesus. Because he is a prisoner, the gospel has been spread right through the palace guard of the emperor himself - so Caesar is now hearing about Jesus...and the church in Rome has been built up.

On another note, Paul lists off his resume in Philippians. And it rocks. Before coming to Christ, Paul was a Pharisee; a proud, self-righteous, highly disciplined and very legalistic man. His Jewish pedigree was impeccable. He was a real blue blood and the things upon which he relied to establish his position before God are duly noted: -- his parentage (tribe of Benjamin), his adherence to ritual (circumcision), his religiosity (he was a Pharisee) and his morality (as to legalistic righteousness, faultless).

And what does he call these things? Rubbish. Actually, the Greek word, scubala is much stronger than that and means doo-doo... This is what he thinks of his resume. No longer a check in the plus column, but actually a deficit. Why? Because sometimes being religious can actually get in the way of being humble and trusting Jesus righteousness instead of your own. So Paul sets the pace for us.

The verses that sum up the life of Paul as well as anything he ever wrote are here in this passage: verses 7-14. "Whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, -- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing

in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me ... But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining (the Greek word is agonidzo -- agonizing) toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Philippians is also famous for the Christ hymn. That poem of chapter 2. Since it is a hymn that is known and sung by the time Paul writes Philippians, it may be among the very earliest writings of the NT. I'd encourage anyone to commit it to memory as the theology there is so rich.

Quote it!

Philippians is ultimately a thank you note for their financial support. And it closes with a word of thanks and confidence that God will supply all of their needs. He does and he will... And that's Philippians...