

We're continuing our series in Philippians, we'll look at Philippians 1 verses 12 through 26 this evening and follow up on Paul's prayer, his, his welcome, his beloved to his betrothed church, the church at Philippi last week as he told them that they're in Christ, in the church, in Philippi for such a time as this. And then he told them what he prayed over them and then he prayed over them this wonderful prayer in verse 9 that their love would grow more and more with knowledge and discernment that they might approve what is excellent and be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of God and now he's going to begin to get into his circumstances and how he's responding to those so that he might challenge them in their circumstances that they might look to Christ and love Christ and respond in like kind. Let's give attention to God's word picking up here at verse 12. I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. So it has become known throughout the whole Imperial Guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now, as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell. I'm hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith. so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus because of my coming to you again. Praise be to God for his holy and errant and therefore authoritative word. I wonder how would you respond if you were falsely accused? Maybe by a community at work. Maybe by someone in the city. Maybe by someone in the church. Maybe by someone in your own family. If they accused you of saying something, if they accused you of doing something, if they accused you of a poor motivation in what you did, if they assaulted your character, how would you respond? Knowing that it's false. And even worse, what if you had no recourse? What if you had no ability to defend yourself in the midst of this false accusation? Some of the lawyers are getting angry. Some of the lawyers are thinking, I'm gonna get rich if this happens in my city. All of us have this sort of justice mechanism that when injustice takes place, it hurts, but it also makes us angry, doesn't it? Injustice makes us angry. A few years ago, I had the opportunity to take the college ministry on a mission trip to Wales. The young pros are going back to Wales this summer. And we did ministry in different churches there. And then on the back end of the trip, we went and visited Oxford, England. And as we visited this incredible city and this incredible campus and looked at all of these different buildings that were 800 to 1,000 years old, it was unbelievable, but one thing stuck out to me and most of the team, and that was, as we encountered a street that was paved like any other out here, like Lady and

Marian, Lady and Marian, there was a four-foot by four-foot cobblestone sort of cutout in the midst of the street. You couldn't miss it. except tourists were walking over it right and left and not noticing it at all. But our tour guide pointed it out and once you saw it, you couldn't miss it. It was unlike the rest of the street. And on this cobblestone street, this cobblestone block, four by four, in the 16th century, bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, and then later on Thomas Cranmer, under the reign of Bloody Mary, Mary I, who was trying to turn back the clock towards her Catholic days and her father's Catholic days and persecuted and killed hundreds of Protestant ministers and believers. It was on this spot in October 16th, 1555 that Latimer and Ridley stood and were burned at the stake for their faith in Christ. And Latimer, as the torches were lit on a blustery cold October day and it was actually hard to get them lit, As the torches were lit, Latimer, who was around 80 years old at this time, could be heard yelling out to Ridley, be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. For we shall this day light such a candle that by God's grace in England, I trust, shall never be put out. They didn't fight. They didn't clamor for their way. They didn't get angry. They took it like a man, so to speak. Why, how? because they were able to keep the main thing, the main thing. And here in this text tonight, that's what Paul's doing, but he's not doing it like the Stoics who thought, let's just show no pain even though we may feel it. That's the epitome of what it means to be a Stoic, is to be content in the sense that we show no pain. No, he's not a Stoic. He's not taking this on like a Stoic. Rather, in the midst of trying circumstances, Paul is actually rejoicing. Just like he did when he went and started the church at Philippi in Acts 16 and he's imprisoned and after midnight he's singing hymns of praise to the Lord and praying when the Lord brings an earthquake and the jailer and his household come to know the Lord. He's rejoicing in the Lord. How could he do this in the midst of his suffering? It's because he rejoices in three things. And that's what I want us to notice tonight. Rejoicing in gospel progress. Rejoicing in gospel proclamation. and rejoicing in Christ in life and death. Let's look at the first one. Rejoicing in gospel progress here in verses 12 through 14. I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. Remember Paul loves the people of Philippi. He loves this flock and he has gone through on a second missionary journey, started this church by God's grace in 50 or so BC. Now he's 10 years later, And he's in prison in Rome. And there would be a temptation to think maybe for the church, maybe even for Paul, maybe for Timothy who's ministering to him, that church would bind the gospel. That the great apostle is bound. that he's contained this great type A preacher of the gospel who wants to burst forth no doubt and continue to proclaim the gospel where it's not been proclaimed to strengthen the churches with the building up of their faith that the gospel as he is bound is now also bound but Paul doesn't believe that. In fact, later on in the next imprisonment, when he actually is facing death and will die, he writes to his beloved Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 and says, remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal, but the word of God is not bound. That the world seeks to bind the truth of the gospel by binding those who proclaim the gospel, but it cannot be thwarted. The gospel continues to go on from strength to strength. In fact, look at verse 13, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. Not only is the gospel advancing, but it's advancing in the most unlikely place, a place that Paul would not have had access to in the

first place were he not bound in prison. It's going to the imperial guard, which means it's going to Caesar's household. This is the praetorium. These are the 9,000 elite soldiers who were the emperor's bodyguards. And the gospel is advancing through them into the household of Caesar when it looks like it's actually bound. These were men who, maybe you think of modern day Navy SEALs, that's the kind of warriors that these guys were. But they weren't just warriors, they were warriors with political influence. They were involved in the politics of the day, and remarkably, their candidate always won the day. Paul is in prison, and likely he's actually bound to one of these guards every hour of the day. They would have rotated, perhaps on an eight-hour shift, and had their legs bound to Paul's, and you can imagine their faces, some of them thinking, if you've been around a Navy SEAL or a soldier, by the way, they can be a little bit gruff, and you can imagine some of them bound to Paul thinking, oh, I gotta hear this again. And yet some of them are bound to Paul, and they come to know Christ. because he is captured and yet they are a perfect captive audience. And he's writing gospel letters and he's proclaiming the gospel and the gospel's actually progressing so much so that it's moving through this imperial guard into Caesar's household outside of prison by God's grace. Because they all know, he says, that he's in prison for Christ. He's there because he's a witness for Christ against the polytheistic, paganistic culture. And they know it. He hasn't done anything wrong. He's just proclaiming Christ. He's pure of contact, but even more. The phrase there in the Greek is in Christo, in Christ. It's as if Paul's saying, I'm not just here because I've witnessed for Christ, but remember, my favorite way to refer to being a Christian is that we are in Christ, we're in union and communion with Christ. His life becomes my life, his death becomes my death, his resurrection becomes my new life, his glory will be my glory, but also his suffering becomes my suffering. And if I am in Christ, I'll also suffer in Christ. And he'll elaborate on that even more next week. It's because they know that he's there in Christ that the gospel is progressing, but it's also producing a gospel courage. Look at verse 14. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. This is remarkable because the thing that was supposed to bind the gospel, silence the gospel preachers, is having the exact opposite effect. The gospel is spreading through the guard, the gospel is spreading in the Caesar's household, and not only so, the believers who are watching nearby and are thinking, the gospel should be bound here, and seeing that Paul and Timothy are bold, even in the midst of their suffering, have renewed strength, renewed encouragement to keep going forward in their proclamation of the gospel. If there's a renewed courage to proclaim now the gospel, it's sort of like when the church father Tertullian said that the blood of the martyr is a seed. That the thing that seems to snuff out the gospel actually produces a fertilization so that the gospel spreads with power. We often think we have to have the right conditions to proclaim the gospel. but actually the Lord is working on our hearts in the midst of every condition so that he might make us effective, as Dr. Ferguson says in his commentary. Think about our cultural climate today. It feels like everything's working against us in this endeavor, doesn't it? Everyone's fighting over politics, over race, over LGBTQI plus issues. And there was a phrase during communism in Russia that the tallest tree gets chopped down. that you don't wanna be the one who stands up and says, hey, I don't agree with this, or you'll get killed. So best to keep your head down, walk in a straight line, not acknowledge anyone, and that's exactly what Satan wants us to do when the culture is against us, when everyone's

fighting. Satan wants to say to you, you know what you should be, is afraid and quiet. Be afraid and be quiet. And if you turn on the news, it's pretty easy for that to sink in, isn't it? Immediately an anxiety creeps in, a fear creeps in, and you just think, I don't know if I wanna talk about this at Thanksgiving. I don't know if I wanna talk about this in the public square. I don't know if I wanna talk about this at university, or even with some of my friends. Be afraid and be quiet. But Paul says, no. Don't wait for a better time, now is the time. God is at work now. In fact, the gospel is progressing. It's like that parable that Jesus tells in Mark 4 of the mustard seed, that it looks like something tiny and obscure, and it doesn't look like it could have any effect in the world, and yet it's always on the grow such that over time, it becomes the greatest tree in the garden and the birds of the air, perhaps a picture of the nations come and find their rest in its shade. It's always on the grow. That's why Jesus can tell his disciples, go and make disciples of all nations. That's why he can say before his ascension in Acts 1.8 that you will receive power when the Spirit comes upon you and you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and all the way to the outermost parts of the world. And then we get a glimpse in Revelation 5 of how that gospel does grow. until every tongue, nation, tribe, and people group are gathered together worshipping the Lord. The gospel's simple, the God-man Jesus dying, rising again, giving us new life by faith in Him, and it's still the universal solution for every human need. And even when we might be afraid, it's on the grow, and we should constantly rejoice gospel growth. But secondly, we should rejoice in gospel proclamation. Here in verses 15 through 18, I heard a local pastor once say, and he might be worshipping with us tonight, he might have preached this morning, that the church is like Noah's Ark. You couldn't stand the stink on the inside if not for the storm on the outside. Well said, and we see that here in this text, don't we? There are some brothers who are proclaiming the gospel with goodwill, with good motivations, because they love Paul, because they love the Lord Jesus, but there are some who are proclaiming the gospel, but they're doing it with ill motives, envy and rivalry, selfish ambition, not sincere, actually to afflict Paul. We might ask the question, who are they? Are they Gnostics? Are they Judaizers? They're probably not a false gospel group because Paul goes after false gospel groups pretty hard because they're proclaiming a false gospel. Rather, it seems as if they, verse 14, maybe he's carrying this logic on, they're brothers. They're actually believers. They're not proclaiming a false gospel. They're just proclaiming the gospel with false motives. And so Paul is saying that they're proclaiming the gospel with false motives. Why? Because they're envious. I want what you have and I don't want you to have it. It's something akin to one of the Ten Commandments. Thou shalt not commit, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife and household and et cetera, et cetera. Covetousness, envy, or as John Currid called it, an inordinate desire. I must have, think of Eve in the garden. It looks pretty and I must have it. They covet and it produces rivalry and disunity. It's what James talks about in James 4. He says, what causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war with you? You desire and you do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you don't ask. You ask and don't receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your own passions. Men proclaiming the gospel in order to hurt Paul, it's almost unfathomable, isn't it? They're envious of him. Maybe they wanna steal his title, the great apostle. Maybe I can have that. Maybe they wanna steal his position within the church. Maybe they wanna

steal his flock while he's away in prison. Maybe they're of a prosperity perspective. If Paul was really beloved by Jesus, he wouldn't be chained up. Or maybe they're saying he's kinda stubborn. If he hadn't appealed to Jerusalem, he wouldn't have been sent off to Rome. That's stubborn Paul. He's getting what he deserves. Whatever it may be, they have motivations to just rub some salt into his wound. And he's unable to respond, in a sense. It's insulting, it's painful, it hurts. He's being stabbed in the back. How would you respond? Would you be ready to fight? Should we be ready to fight? Look what he says in verse 18, what then? You can read that as, so what? It's unbelievable to think that Paul is getting stabbed in the back here and he says, so what? So what? Why? that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Because he's kept the main thing the main thing. What he cares about is gospel proclamation. Now he's not okay with their motives, of course he's not, and he doesn't want that for us, and he would probably call that to task if he was with them, but what he cares most about is that Christ is proclaimed. And I wonder, could you do this, could I do this? What happens in your life if someone just texts you and says, hey, call me? Don't you already have anxiety within your heart? Or what if they say, we need to talk? Don't you already get defensive and begin to think to yourself, hey, what's happened here? What's going on? Here's what I did right and here's what I did, what could they be mad at me for and how do I defend myself? We all do that, slander, assault, imprisonment, possibly martyrdom for Paul and he says, so what? The gospel's proclaimed. That's where I find my joy. That's what I rejoice in. Maybe there's a pertinent and timely word here for my fellow ministers as we head off to Synod this week. Should be a place where we rejoice with those who rejoice, we weep with those who weep, but oftentimes we can find ourselves envious of certain men or certain pulpits, slanderous, gossipful, frustrated with other people, There's a word for us there, to keep the main thing the main thing. To rejoice in gospel progress and to rejoice in gospel proclamation, but how? Thirdly here, by rejoicing in Christ in life and in death. I know that doesn't carry the alliteration. It's the best I could do. Here in verses 18b through 26, Paul finds himself now in a bit of a dilemma. It's not like the dilemmas that you and I face. We think we have lots of dilemmas every day, don't we? And we do have plenty of problems that we deal with, but Paul finds himself in a dilemma. It's not a dilemma of how to defend himself from injustice. That's the dilemma we would probably find ourselves in in this situation, isn't it? It's not the dilemma of how to seek justice, how to seek retribution, how to seek self-protection. No, rather the dilemma is here in verse 21 through 24. For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. We'll come back to that. If I'm to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell. I'm hard-pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. It's the dilemma of whether he should depart or stay. The picture here of departure is beautiful. It's a picture in the Greek of picking up anchor and setting sail. Paul is in a dilemma here of whether he should pick up anchor and set sail from this life to the next. And for Paul, One option is clearly better than the other, verse 23, I'm hard-pressed between the two, but my desire is to depart and be with Christ. That's far better. It's fascinating, isn't it? How often, we'll talk about this a little bit next week as well, John Calvin talked about one of the ways that we grow in our maturity, the process of sanctification, the third step, actually, he says, is that we meditate upon the future life. And he argues that, I'm getting ahead of myself,

he argues that we don't do that, because we don't really suffer enough or understand what our suffering is to induce a longing for Christ in glory. And Paul is doing that, he's in the midst of suffering, he's thinking about heaven, he's thinking about Christ, his desires to be with Christ in glory that's far better, not than his prison experience, but anything on this earth, anything this earth could offer him, but he's governed not by his own desires, even though his desires are actually very pure, he's governed not by his desires, but by Christ's desires for him. And it begs the question, when we make decisions, what question do we ask? What I think I find myself often asking subtly or not so subtly is, what's best for me right now? In this scenario, what should I do that will be best for me right now? Maybe it has to do with marrying a spouse. Maybe it has to do with taking on a certain career. Maybe it has to do with your job and advancement in society or joining a certain club so that you will experience pleasure or you'll be noticed in society. Whatever it may be, moving into a certain neighborhood, having a certain house. What's best for me right now? But when Paul finds that he needs discernment, that's not actually the question he asks. In fact, it's interesting. It seems as if this is almost an application of what he's prayed in verse nine. It's my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve what is excellent. And now here's Paul in the midst of a challenging situation, having a love for Christ and a knowledge of Christ both now and in eternity that is stimulating him into a need for discernment that he's seeking to approve what's most excellent. There's many things that could be excellent in his life. Staying could be excellent. Getting out of prison could be excellent. Seeing the fruit of his labor could be excellent. He sees that to be in heaven is most excellent, but second best is earth. Why? Not for himself, actually. but for Paul's people. It says in verse 25, convinced of this, that he will actually be delivered, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus because of my coming to you again. Notice how selfless and humble this response is for Paul. How Christ-centered and Christ-exalting this response is. He knows that it would be better to be with Christ forever in glory, but he has a sense that what Christ has for him here is to remain here because it's better for you. Not because it's better for Paul, but because it's better for the flock that he stay, proclaim the gospel, build up the church. It's so selfless, it's so humble, it's so Christ-centered, it's so God-exalting, so that those who are in Christ might progress, he says, have joy in their faith and glory in Christ Jesus. And so therefore, I'm convinced that I will stay. He's saying it's not about me. It's not about my exaltation. It's about Christ's exaltation with my life, with my body. Whatever he does with me, it's about his exaltation. And I live in an awareness of that reality that if he takes me, it's for his glory. If he leaves me, it's for his glory. It's not about justice for me. It's not about what I deserve. Because what I deserve is justice. I deserve the unmitigated wrath of God for my sin, but what I've received is grace, and when I've supped with the Lord Jesus in such a way, I'm filled to the overflow that I then wanna live for others, to give that grace away for their progress, for their joy, that they might glory in Christ Jesus. How does he get here? He says in 18, yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers, the prayers of the people have encouraged him along in this endeavor. And the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, in a unique way, has been encouraging him along and comforting him and helping him grow in prison and have this perspective. This will turn out for my

deliverance. The word there, it's interesting, is soterion. It's the word for which we get the word salvation. That's the concept. Rescue, salvation. And Paul's not saying that This imprisonment and what Christ is doing in my life will work out just for my deliverance from prison, although he seems convinced that that will happen, but he's saying that Christ is so committed to me, and I'm united with him, that one day he will bring me home to salvation. He's given me salvation now, he'll give it to me in full at the day of Christ Jesus that he's already alluded to in verse 11. that he will deliver me one day, and when it's that day, it's that day, and until then, I'm here for gospel progress, gospel proclamation, and the blessing of the church that they might grow up into Christ who is their head. And he gets here by also having, as cheesy perhaps as it sounds, a life verse, so to speak. If Paul had a life verse, perhaps it would be verse 21. For me to live as Christ, and to die is gain. It's his motivation in life and death. It's his perspective in the midst of unfathomable circumstances. This is the verse. This is the perspective that he turns to. To be in Christ is to have him. And to have him is to have everything. And when you have him, you have everything in this life and you only get gain in that life because you're with him in glory and that's far better. But when you're with him now, you also have him and the only way that you long to be with him in glory is to love and live for him on this earth. Paul's come to love the Lord Jesus and live for the Lord Jesus to find his ultimate worth and identity to be in Christ Jesus so that he then longs for him and glory and lives for purpose for him on this earth. He's calling us to do the same. But if you're not in Christ Jesus, this kind of joy, this kind of purpose, this kind of hope can actually be yours tonight as well. If you're living for prosperity, it will let you down in the end. If you're living for bitterness, it's a poison in your soul that won't give you what you think it'll give you. If you're living for justice, to pay people back for what they've done to you, the call this evening is to let it all go and come to Christ and find a joy in him and a life in him that will never let you down. that is life and life abundantly on earth and gain in glory forever in heaven. To live in Christ is to finally find joy and purpose and hope of glory. And would it be said of us as the people of God, as the flock of God, that no matter our circumstances, and some of you are going through unbelievable circumstances this evening, that no matter our circumstances, we wouldn't just grin and bear it, we wouldn't just fake our way through it, we wouldn't become bitter in the midst of it, but rather we would, by God's grace, in Christ Jesus, rejoice in it, in gospel progress, in gospel proclamation, and in living in Christ and dying in Christ. And next week, we'll talk even more about what it looks like to suffer in Christ. Well, let's turn to Christ before we go to the table. Gracious God and most Holy Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this word to us this morning, maybe this evening, maybe a hard word as we think about what it means to live for you in very trying circumstances, but thank you that you speak this word to us And you encourage us even by looking at Paul's life as he dealt with it in his own life. But more than anything, we know that we have a Savior who didn't avoid suffering for us, but went through the fire of judgment that might only give to us the blessings of grace forever and ever. One of those being this table. as he condescends to us, but even more than that, as he lifts us up to heaven, that we might get a taste of the gain that we have in him, and the fellowship that we have with him, and the future glory that we long for. And so encourage our hearts, and strengthen us to live for you, both this day and forevermore, in Christ's name, amen.