

Yateley Baptist Church, Sunday 26 April 2020

Opening Prayer

Hymn: Praise 2! 13

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

2 He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

3 And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

Stuart Townend

Reading: Philippians 1:12-26, ESV

¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,
¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. 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.

¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶ The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

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Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ 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 honoured in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Hymn: Praise! 804

When peace, like a river, attends all my way,
when sorrows like sea-billows roll,
whatever my path, you have taught me to say,
'It is well, it is well with my soul.'

*'It is well with my soul,
it is well, it is well with my soul.'*

2 Though Satan may buffet, though trials may
 come,
let this calm assurance control:
that Christ knows my need and my helplessness
 here
and has shed his own blood for my soul.

3 The joy, O the joy of this glorious thought!
my sin, not in part but the whole,
is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more;
praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

4 For me it is Christ, it is Christ now to live!
Though death's waters over me roll,
no fear shall be mine, for in death as in life
you will whisper your peace to my soul.

5 But, Lord, for your coming in glory we wait;
the sky, not the grave, is our goal;
the trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall
 descend:
bless the Lord, bless the Lord, O my soul!

Horatio G Spafford (1828-1888)

Prayer

Hymn: Praise 2! 24

Blessed be your name in the land that is
plentiful

Where the streams of abundance flow

Blessed be your name

Blessed be your name when I'm found in the
desert place

Though I walk through the wilderness

Blessed be your name

*Every blessing you pour out I'll turn back to
praise*

When the darkness closes in, Lord

Still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be your name

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be your glorious name

Blessed be your name when the sun's shining
down on me

When the world's "all as it should be"

Blessed be your name

Blessed be your name on the road marked with
suffering

Though there's pain in the offering

Blessed be your name

*Every blessing you pour out I'll turn back to
praise*

When the darkness closes in, Lord

Still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be your name

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be your glorious name

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be your name

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be your glorious name

Beth & Matt Redman

Sermon: Philippians 1:18b-26 – Blessed Assurance

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

It's easy to make judgements about the world and how to run it from our armchair or deckchair. There's no consequences for our opinions other than being proved right or looking a little foolish.

Michal Bentley says: “Sometimes this kind of predicament is referred to in terms of ‘being caught in the horns of a dilemma’. This comes from the word ‘lemma’, which means something that is taken for granted, and a double ‘lemma’ is called a dilemma. The picture conjured up by this phrase is of someone facing a mad bull which is charging towards him and finding that if he tries to seize hold of one horn, the bull will simply toss him with the other.”

Paul was facing a life or death dilemma in verses 21-22: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.”

The government are aiming to protect lives, so what does Paul mean?

It all has to do with Paul's joyous confidence in the God whom he serves – the God on who's account he currently finds himself imprisoned in a rented house in Rome, chained to a member of the Imperial Guard.

Verse 21: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” and 4:13, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” shows Paul's hope and confidence is the assurance that he has that no matter what happens, God is with him, both in life and in death and that as a result, he can face anything that life has to throw at him.

1. An Assured Present (18b-20)

“What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence 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 with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether it is by life or by death.”

Paul has experienced much greater suffering in his life than we will ever know and his current situation was worse than ours, how can he rejoice? Why isn't he embittered and angry?

Paul has confidence in God's deliverance, if not now then ultimately. The word he uses here for “deliverance” is the word *soterian*, generally translated as “salvation” and usually refers to the final deliverance of God's people at the last judgement, when they will stand vindicated before God.

2 Timothy 4:18, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.” God had never abandoned Paul and he never would.

verse 19: "...For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance..." Paul was relying on the prayers of the Philippians that through them God would supply an increased sense of the Spirit.

What does Paul mean by this? We already have the Spirit if we are Christians: "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Romans 8:9b).

There are times when believers are granted to experience more of the Spirit's fullness and power. In Acts:

- Luke before the Sanhedrin: "filled with the Holy Spirit" (4:8),
- The Disciples: "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (4:31b).
- Stephen "But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (7:55).
- Paul was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and judged Elymas, the magician (13:9).

Those who were left behind in Pisidian Antioch: "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (13:52).

God's servants regularly received special supplies of the Spirit's filling during times of trial.

Paul knew that his friends in Philippi would be praying for him. They believed in the power of prayer. They shared with him in the fellowship of the gospel, and they took that sense of partnership seriously. This gave him great confidence.

We must pray this way for one another, especially for those who are going through challenging times.

When was the last time you prayed for a filling of the Spirit?

We need to see that our prayers not only effect the confidence of our brothers and sisters, but also their deliverance.

Verse 20: "as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether it is by life or by death."

Biblical hope overflows with confidence because we know that the future belongs to God, who does all things well.

2. An Assured Future (21-26)

Paul trusted that God was 'working for the good' (Rom 8 v 28)

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." V21 What does this actually mean? How does it work out practically in our lives?

Union with Christ - We are “in Christ”- 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Lydia - has everything that the world considers to be important. But without Christ, she would be spiritually bankrupt. All that she had came with an inbuilt use-by date. Why would Paul live for that?

A young slave girl - sold into slavery, vulnerable even to the point of demonic possession. Like the slave girl, Paul had plenty of reasons to be bitter and to seek vengeance on those who had done him wrong. Paul could live to get even – but again, why would he?

Paul saw the contrast of moral brokenness and spiritual dysfunction and the transformation and the joy that the gospel brings as it heals, transforms and restores.

“To live is Christ.” In the logic of the gospel, there are no alternatives to Christ. He has no rivals. Christ alone is worth living for.

“To die is gain.”

1 John 3:2: “we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”

But in death, the battle will be over and we will be with our Saviour in the glorious righteousness that he won for us – forever! There will be, no “mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

“If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am 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” (22-24). Alec Motyer says, “For Paul, death is a glorious possession of Christ; life is a glorious bearing of fruit.” That was some choice – it was like asking a child whether they wanted their birthday or Christmas more.

Death for the Christian is always far better. The question is, do we believe that? Do we believe, whatever age we are, that to be with Christ is the ultimate?

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

“But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account” (24). The apostle’s deep longing for heaven was subordinate to what was best for his brothers and sisters.

Frank Thielman says, “Every major feature of his life at the time when he wrote the letter – his physical comfort, the opinions other have about him, his position with respect to the secular authorities, and the question of whether he lives or dies – are moulded by his commitment to the advance of the gospel.”

Verses 25-26: “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.”

George Whitfield, “We are immortal until our work is done”.

By the grace of God, the blessed assurance that Paul had is ours to cling to as well and with him, we can say, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

Hymn

Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine:
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

2 Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

*This is my story,
this is my song,
praising my Saviour
all the day long.*

3 Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest;
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

Frances J van Alstyne (1820-1915)