

MANUSCRIPT OUTLINE: Philippians 1:19-30 by Peter Craig

Where do true hope and joy come from? What's their source? Many things promise hope and joy. Possessions, relationships, experiences...for me, it was my career. Ever since I was nine-year-old, I wanted to make movies. It all began in grade school when I started making intense, pulse-pounding action movies. At least that's what they seemed like at the time. They were actually pretty bad ninja movies made with plastic swords and fireworks for pyrotechnics. But, fast forward a few decades and I had made it. I had an agent, films in SXSW, my first screenplay was supported by Sundance, my second was optioned by a major studio, I was selling pitches, making great money, and literally being seen in paparazzi photos with actors you might recognize. On the surface, I had every reason to rejoice, but I was hands-down the most miserable I had ever been in my entire life. You can ask my wife. I was a grown man literally crying on the floor of my office while writing a sitcom for Sony Pictures. I was depressed, fearful, and bitterly broken. How could this be? What was I missing?

Right now, you might be in the same place. On paper, you've got it all figured out: the right job, house, Instagram feed, but true hope and joy are missing from the equation. Or maybe that's not you. Maybe your life has taken some rough turns. You're suffering, tired, and running on empty. If that's you, you might be asking the same question. Where can true hope and joy be found?

Today, we're going to seek to find the answer by looking under the hood of the Apostle Paul. Unlike me writing screenplays and having every reason to rejoice, Paul had everything stripped away from him and had every excuse to despair. But despite his circumstances, Paul was full of hope, joy, and faith. So, what's his secret? What makes Paul tick? We're going to look at three things: 1. Prayer 2. Perspective 3. Unity

INTRO PRAYER

PRAYER

1. Rejoicing in Deliverance

a. Verse 18b: "Yes, and I will rejoice..."

- b. A record needle scratch would be appropriate here. Paul comes right out the gate, rejoicing! Earlier in verse 18, he rejoiced because of the advancement of the Gospel and now he's rejoicing in what's to come. "*I will rejoice...*"
- c. Let's remember, Paul is in prison while writing this letter. And this isn't his first rodeo.
 - i. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were thrown in jail during their first missionary trip to Philippi. It says that they were beaten with rods and thrown into an inner cell with their feet fastened in stocks. What was their response that night? They prayed and sang hymns to God!
 - ii. And now, here we are again. Paul is in jail rejoicing!
 - iii. So what's up with this guy? Is he crazy? Maybe he's not fully in touch with the severity of his circumstances. He is in jail, potentially awaiting death. How can he be so defiant to rejoice in his situation?
- d. Illustration: Without going into too much detail, my cousin and I were briefly detained by police while on a filming trip in Cambodia. First, it's not as bad as it sounds. Secondly, we were completely innocent. Our car was hit by a close relative of some high-ranking government official and because of that, they momentarily detained us to see what had happened. Again, not our fault. But the point is I didn't rejoice! I was upset and slightly nervous we might have incited a small, yet highly inconvenient international incident.

- e. So, what's Paul's secret for his joy during his detainment? Verse 19 gives us a clue.
- f. **Verse 19: "19 for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,"**
- g. Okay! We have our answer! Deliverance! I know when I was released from jail, I was pretty joyful.
 - i. But maybe that's not what Paul's trying to say here. He goes on...
 - 1. **Verse 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 honored in my body, whether by life or by death."**
 - 2. Wait. If Paul is rejoicing in his release from prison, why is he suddenly unsure whether he will live or die?
 - ii. Digging a little deeper, we see that Paul is actually recalling the words of Job in the midst of his suffering after losing his family, wealth, and physical health.
 - 1. **Job 13:15-16: "Though he (God) slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face. This will be my salvation,..."**
 - 2. The "salvation" Job is referring to is eternal redemption by the Lord. Though he suffers, he will be saved! Sound familiar?
- h. We could go on, but Paul's joy comes from the knowledge that, though he doesn't fully know whether he'll live or die in jail, he knows that he will be eternally saved! That's what he means by "deliverance" in verse 19.
- i. But wait. How does Paul remain so joyful in this predicament? All his possessions are gone and he's lost his freedom. Is Paul superhuman? Does he not feel fear, anxiety, or despair?
- j. Like Paul, many of us have put our faith in Christ and believe that eternal salvation awaits us. But knowing this and living it out in the present are two entirely different things.
- k. How do we get this future hope to land solidly on our hearts and minds today while we are at work, struggling in our marriages, chronically ill, frustrated with parenting, wanting a better career, desiring a spouse, depressed, anxious, lonely?
- l. Like Paul, where do we get the strength and courage to rejoice, hope and honor Christ with our lives? Well, he tells us...

2. Prayer and the Help from the Spirit

- a. **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,"**
- b. Paul's hope, joy, and courage are not unfounded and they're not conjured up by wishful thinking either. They are empowered through the prayers of the Philippians and the help of the Holy Spirit!
 - i. You see, Paul knows that he is not alone. First, he knows the Philippian church is praying for him and, in a sense, are present with him.
 - 1. **Verse 1:5: "because of your partnership in the Gospel with me from the first day until now."**
 - 2. **Verse 1:7: "I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel"**
- c. So, the Philippians are praying for Paul, but what do these prayers actually do? Maybe even a better question for us: What do our prayers do?
 - i. They ignite the Spirit! Look with me...
 - ii. This pairing, "prayer and help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" signifies a connection. A cause and effect. The Greek can be translated, "your prayers and the consequent supply of the Holy Spirit..." (The Message of Philippians, p. 85).
 - iii. The Spirit certainly works on His own accord, but Scripture also teaches us that our prayers can initiate His help!

- d. So, you might be thinking, “Okay, the Holy Spirit sounds great and all, but how exactly does He help?
 - i. What we see in Scripture that the Holy Spirit is a Counselor, a guide, and even an Intercessor.
 - 1. Romans 8:26: *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”*
 - ii. The Spirit also gives us strength to persevere:
 - 1. Romans 5:4-5: *“we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”*
 - iii. And, finally, the Spirit gives us hope, joy, and peace.
 - 1. Romans 15:13: *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”*
- e. You see, Paul isn’t a perfect saint. He is a dependent one. He is dependent on the prayers of the church and the help of the Holy Spirit to remain unashamed of Christ and honor Him in life and in death.
- f. And If the Apostle Paul needs these things, we do too.

3. Application

- a. But how should we pray? Looking at Paul and the Philippians, here are three brief thoughts.
- b. First, We Pray Personally
 - i. Paul almost always prays for God’s work to be completed in the heart of a person rather than for circumstantial change. God is often using our circumstances, good or bad, to draw us closer to Him, so let’s pray for that to happen.
- c. Secondly, We Pray Presently
 - i. Examining this letter, it’s easy to see that Paul and Philippians were actively engaged in each other’s life. Most notably in prayer. It seems to be a first response.
 - 1. Illustration: A few years ago, Erin and I woke up to our daughter, Lydia, crying. So we rush into her room that she was sharing with our oldest, Ellie, and it was a crime scene. Not to be too graphic, but throw up was everywhere. Finally, after coming to from the shock and awe of the scene, we went into parental go-mode. Dad on clean up and Mom on caregiving. And right as we jumped into these roles headfirst, Ellie, in the bunk above Lydia, began praying out loud for her sister. It stopped me dead in my tracks. Ellie’s first response was prayer!
 - ii. Church, what’s your first response when difficulties arise? Do you worry, get angry, get busy, give up? What would it look like if your first response when difficulties arise was present and personal prayer?
- d. Finally, We Pray Perpetually
 - i. We don’t need to wait for bad circumstances to pray for one another. Each one of us are already in the most epic and important fight of our lives: The fight of faith. Let’s pray without ceasing for each other’s faith and joy in all circumstances and seasons.
- e. Illustration: When I was going through my difficult time as a screenwriter. Looking back, I now know that I had many people praying for me: family, friends, my small group at the time. They weren’t praying that I would figure out my script or that I would advance in my career. They were personally, presently, and perpetually asking the Lord to work in my life and give me true peace and joy. Looking back, I know that those prayers were answered and it all resulted, for me, in a changed perspective.

PERSPECTIVE

1. To Live is Christ, to Die is Gain

a. Verse 21: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

- b. We finally get a clear look at Paul's perspective and bedrock conviction.
 - i. The literal translation of the Greek hits home even more viscerally: "to live-Christ, to die-gain".
 - ii. There is a drumbeat to his language. This, you might say, is Paul's battle cry. "to live-Christ, to die-gain. to live-Christ, to die-gain..."
- c. First, "To live-Christ"
 - i. The lack of a verb reveals the statement's many possibilities. It can be filled in with: To live is Christ. To live means Christ. To live honors Christ. To live depends on Christ. (The Letter to the Philippians, p. 81).
 1. Jesus is the center of Paul's universe.
 2. A question you might ask yourself is "What's at the center of your universe?" Whether you are a Christian or not, we all put something in the center of our lives that defines us: our job, family, independence, reputation, entertainment...fill in the blank. The answer to that question informs everything we are and desire.
 3. For me, it was my career and accomplishments.
 4. For Paul, it's Jesus. He is his purpose and identity.
 - ii. And He is also his way of life!
 1. Christ's example is how Paul lives. Selflessly serving, sacrificing, and doing it all with great humility. Christ is what he lives for and Christ is how he lives.
 2. Verse 22: "If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two."
 3. Listen to Paul's heart. To live is to serve Christ!
 - iii. Again, Paul isn't perfect and he even shares this later in chapter 3.
 1. And that's the thing. Perfection is not the point. Perspective and progress in light of Christ's work and perfection is the point.
 - iv. Now, to the flip side of this coin.
- d. "To die-gain."
 - i. This reveals Paul's unwavering confidence and hope in his deliverance. Death is gain!
 1. Phil 3:8: "...For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ."
 - ii. Paul doesn't see death as an escape from suffering. Remember, "To live is Christ". Dying is simply the finish line that must be crossed to receive the ultimate reward: Christ Himself!
- e. To Paul, Christ is all of life and death is all of Christ! No wonder he can rejoice!

2. Paul Can't Lose

- a. The man can't lose! He has everything he could ever want in life and he gets even more in death!
 - i. And what do you do when you are trying to decide between two very evenly matched things? You make a pros and cons list.
- b. Verse 22-24: "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."
- c. Finally, Paul reveals his true desire. He wants to die and be gloriously ushered into Christ's perfect and holy presence.

- d. However, empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christ's self-sacrificing life becomes his own and he decides that it would be better to go on serving the church. Why? What's his motivation?
 - i. **Verse 26: "so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again."**
- e. Listen to that...To live is to glorify Christ!

3. Application

- a. So, what do we do with all of this? It might be easy to throw your hands up and say, I can't be Paul. Christ is all of life and death is all of Christ? How is that perspective even possible?
- b. First, we pray and ask the Spirit for help. Secondly, we do what Paul does. We seek to know Christ.
 - i. Phil 3:8: "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord..."
- c. How do we seek to know Christ? We spend time with Him in His Word.
 - i. To truly love a person, you must spend time with them, listen to them, and get to know them. We know this from our spouses, friends, children, but how often do we apply it to our relationship with God?
 - ii. To know God's Son is to know God's Word. Speaking of Jesus, John 1:14, it says...
 - 1. John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."
- d. Illustration: At my low point of writing, I realized that I needed help. Finally, by God's grace alone, I went (or more accurately, crawled) to God's Word looking for hope. The longer I stared at Christ, the more I began to see Him for who He is...
 - i. **Philippians 2:6-8: "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."**
 - ii. Stop and think about that for a moment. The God of the universe became a man to die in your place for your sins.
- e. Illustration: In my story, the stresses of writing didn't budge, but suddenly my perspective on who God was and what He did through Christ changed everything. Finally, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I was able to see my sin of placing my career and achievements at the center of my universe in light of the beauty, freedom, and life offered in Jesus. Ultimately, I began to catch a small glimpse of what inspired Paul to boldly proclaim, "*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*" And what came next for me? Joy!
 - i. **Verse 25: "Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith..."**
 - ii. Progress in the faith and joy are interconnected. The more you get to know Jesus and recognize His voice, understand His teachings, and experience His love, a new perspective will emerge and the hope and joy that you are looking for, will follow.

UNITY

1. Citizenship

- a. Finally, after concluding that he will live and continue serving the church, Paul continues with a command that would be very personal to the Philippians.
- b. **Verse 27a: “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ...”**
- c. The Greek can also be translated, **“Whatever happens, as citizens of Heaven live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ...”**
 - i. By addressing the Philippians’ identities as citizens, Paul is directly speaking to the pride that they would have as citizens of Rome. He knows that this is a core identity, yet he is raising the bar and calling them to a greater and more satisfying citizenship?
 - ii. Imagine telling that to a proud, flag-waving American...or Texan...or even Austinite!
- d. It’s important to note that Paul isn’t commanding the Philippians to earn their citizenship. He is simply reminding them that they are already citizens of Heaven and calling them to live according to the citizenship already won for them by Christ.
- e. Now, how are citizens of Heaven called to live?

2. United Faith

- a. In Unity!
 - i. **Verse 27b-28: “...so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.”**
- b. Church, these encouragements to pray and seek to know Christ aren’t meant be pursued in isolation. They are meant for be done in community.
- c. Is this easy? Absolutely not says everyone who’s been in a city group. True community isn’t efficient or economic, but it’s necessary. Because, whether you believe it or not, like the Philippians, we are at war, in the trenches and working to take ground.
 - i. But the good news is, we don’t fight alone!
 - 1. **Phil 4:1: “stand firm thus in the Lord”.**
 - 2. This means we stand firm in God’s power and strength, not our own. We have a Heavenly Father that stands with us and empowers us to fight!
 - ii. He also equips us to fight as well.
 - 1. **Ephesians 6:10-11: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”**
- d. Now, citizens of Austin (parents, students, artists, project managers for tech companies) we might not be facing the exact same physical opposition as the Philippian church, but we do indeed face the same enemy looking to rob us of our unity, courage, joy, and faith.
 - i. Where the Philippians were facing imprisonment, torture, and execution, our enemy often takes the form of comfort, consumption, and distraction to disarm us and pull us in opposite directions.
 - ii. The point is, our enemy might look different, but he has all the same destructive power to steal our hope and joy as he did with the Philippians and we need to strive side by side together in the strength of the Lord to stand firm in the faith.

3. Application

- a. So what does this “striving side by side” look like for us? You might be wondering how do we live out this call to unity? Two quick points.
 - i. First, we show up.
 - 1. We can’t strive side by side for the faith if we aren’t literally side by side.
 - 2. Tangibly, here at City Life, we have a few ways to plug into our community.
 - a. At Sunday gatherings.

- b. In City Groups
 - c. In Fight Clubs
 - d. And finally, in life. We are family, friends, fellow citizens, and soldiers in arms fighting side by side. We do it together!
- ii. Next, we dig in.
1. It's one thing to just show up to city group, but it's entirely another to be known. As we've seen today, we already have everything we could ever want and need in Christ, so we now have the freedom to be vulnerable and share our lives with one another without fear of judgment or condemnation.
 2. We should also seek to know one another. If you are in a city group, serve your brothers and sisters by investing in their lives, asking them questions, and looking for ways to encourage and serve them. Know your brothers and sisters.
 3. Finally, as we grow in relationship, begin fighting for each other's faith. Confess your sins, repent, and pray for one another. Remember the partnership of the Philippians with Paul and Paul's service and love for the Philippians. This is what striving side by side looks like. Fighting with and for one another in the faith.
- b. The truth of the matter is, you need this. I need this.
- c. Illustration: To finish my story, through the prayers of my church family and the help of the Holy Spirit, God opened my eyes to my sin and desperate need to know Christ. Through His Word, He gave me a new perspective and He opened my eyes to the beauty of His Son, Jesus. By God's grace alone, I've now seen where true hope and joy can be found. However, I'm still in the fight. We are all still in the fight and we need God's work in and through one another to remind ourselves of the very thing Paul rejoiced over in verse 19 and now highlights once again in verse 28.
- i. **Verse 28: "This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God."**

FINAL THOUGHTS

City Life Church, we have every reason to rejoice because of the deliverance God has freely given to us through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Some of you might be suffering right now. You might feel lonely, anxious, and fearful. Some of you might have every reason to rejoice, but that hope and joy we've discussed today seems distant and unattainable. Or maybe some of you are new to this idea of faith in Christ. Let me ask...is the thing that you have placed at the center of your universe giving you the hope and joy you're longing for? No matter which one of these people you are, I want to encourage you to turn to Jesus. Start by turning to Him today in community, ask for prayer, and begin seeking to know Him in His Word. I pray that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the hope, joy, and peace we see in Paul will empower you to echo his defiant battle cry, "To live is Christ. To die is gain."

END PRAYER