

Message #7

Philippians 1:19-21

Let me read for you a remarkable career chronology:

- 1) In 1831 - he failed in business.
- 2) In 1832 - he was defeated for the legislature.
- 3) In 1833 - he failed in business.
- 4) In 1834 - he was elected to the legislature.
- 5) In 1835 - his sweetheart died.
- 6) In 1836 - he had a nervous breakdown.
- 7) In 1838 - he was defeated as speaker.
- 8) In 1840 - he was defeated as an elector.
- 9) In 1843 - he was defeated for congress.
- 10) In 1846 - he was elected to congress.
- 11) In 1848 - he was defeated for congress.
- 12) In 1855 - he was defeated for the senate.
- 13) In 1856 - he was defeated for Vice President.
- 14) In 1858 - he was defeated for the senate.
- 15) In 1860 - he was elected President of the United States.

That is the historical chronology and political career of Abraham Lincoln. He is considered by many to be the greatest president in history.

When Mr. Lincoln was once asked about this he said, "I do the very best I know how—the very best I can; and I mean to keep doing so." President Lincoln was totally focused on accomplishing political objectives and no negative circumstances, no setbacks; no personal difficulties; no criticisms could stop him from his objective.

That is the way it was for the Apostle Paul. He was totally focused on Jesus Christ. When it comes to the world wide impact of an Apostle, none are greater than Paul. He was the Apostle singled out by God to reach the Gentile world. But if ever you want to see a negative chronology, all one must do is study his life.

Usually, when Paul went somewhere to minister, he ended up hated, jailed, beaten, threatened and abandoned. However, there can be no doubt that he left his mark on this world in a way that surpasses even most characters of the Bible. His message was one of the grace of God and his life glorified God. He was actually rejoicing and singing praise hymns in a Philippian jail (Acts 16:25).

The key to his impact and joy was his focus. His life was totally focused on Jesus Christ. You could jail Paul, you could beat Paul, you could threaten Paul, you could abandon Paul and you could even kill Paul; but you could not get him to move away from his focus on Jesus Christ.

A BELIEVER WHO IS IMPACTING AND JOYFUL AND WHO WILL NOT END UP ASHAMED IS ONE WHO KEEPS HIS FOCUS COMPLETELY ON JESUS CHRIST AND RELIES ON PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The Apostle Paul is proof that it is possible to influence others even when your personal world is falling apart. **Paul's goal in life was to exalt Jesus Christ.** He did not want to end up ashamed.

In these verses Paul sets forth what is necessary to do that. What is needed to rejoice and have a life that exalts Jesus Christ? There are three ingredients to a joyful life that praises God that are spelled out in these verses:

INGREDIENT #1 – A joyful, Christ-exalting, non-ashamed life requires prayer. **1:19a**

Paul was a great Apostle, but he was also just a man. He was a man who needed to pray and he needed the prayer support of God's people. Paul knew that in order for him to have a life that was bold and Christ-honoring and that would not be ashamed, he needed God's people praying for him.

Now the pronoun "this" (**v. 19**) refers to all of the things that were happening to him that he described in verses 12-17. He knew that everything that happened to him was happening according to the Sovereign plan of God.

He also knew that the prayers of God's people could lead to his deliverance. Now the question of this is to what deliverance is he referring. There have been about six views on this point:

View #1 - Some say Paul was thinking about a deliverance from jail.

Some have said that what Paul meant is that through the prayers of God's people, he would get out of jail. There are a couple of problems with this. First, Paul wasn't certain he was going to get out of jail and second, the context is one of being bold and one of having a life that brings praise to God.

In fact, the pronoun "this" refers to all of the negative things he was experiencing. So this interpretation means that through the prayers of God's people he would maintain a boldness and a life that exalts God, no matter what he experienced.

View #2 - Some say Paul was thinking about a deliverance to heaven.

Being delivered to heaven is not contingent on the prayers of God's people; it is contingent upon believing on Jesus Christ. Paul had trusted Christ some 30 years prior to this and it is doubtful he would be saying through the prayers of the people I will be delivered to heaven.

View #3 - Some say Paul was thinking about a deliverance from enemies.

The enemies would be those who would preach Christ, yet hate Paul. They were trying to make life miserable for Paul. The prayers of God's people would help him when facing this kind of pressure and adversity.

View #4 - Some say Paul was thinking about a deliverance from condemnation.

Deliverance from condemnation is determined by faith in Christ and once one has believed on Christ there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1).

View #5 - Some say Paul was thinking about a deliverance of others.

According to this view, through the prayers of God's people, Paul would be able to communicate the Gospel that would save other people. The problem with this view is the pronoun "my." Paul says this will turn out for "my deliverance," not "their deliverance."

View #6 - Some say Paul was thinking about a deliverance to spiritual-development and a non-ashamed life.

We believe this is what Paul had in mind because this is what fits the context. The prayers of God's people would help Paul maintain his rock solid testimony and he would manifest Jesus Christ and not be put to shame in anything.

Paul knew that through the prayers of God's people, he would be able to maintain the type of testimony that would enable him to glorify God and manifest Jesus Christ, no matter what. No matter what happened to him, he would not end up ashamed, in part, through the prayer support of God's people.

Moises Silva, who has written a good commentary on the Greek text of Philippians, said this is a "remarkable point." Our development is not automatic. Our ability to finish strong and bold and not end up ashamed comes in part through the prayers of others for us.

This is why it is important that we pray for each other. We pray for our mates, our children, our church, our elders and deacons and our pastor. It is critical to not being ashamed.

In all reality what Paul is doing here is asking people to pray for him so that his life would count for God. He did not want to end up ashamed. He wanted to finish life with a Christ-exalting life. Now this is a man who has had, at this point, a phenomenal impacting ministry.

He has founded many churches; he has written much of the New Testament; he has been caught up to the third heaven and he still wants people to pray for him because he senses the need so that he will be strong and bold and not end up ashamed. **If a guy like Paul needed this, how much more do we need this?**

I stumbled across this quote: “I have seen patients that were dead by all standards. We knew they could not live. But I have seen a minister come to the bedside and do something for him that I could not do, although I have done everything in my professional power. But something touched some immortal spark in him and in defiance of medical knowledge and materialistic common sense, that patient lived.” That statement was made by Dr. Will Mayo of the famous Will and Charles Mayo, who founded the Mayo clinic. Dr. Mayo knew prayer brought a unique power to a sick patient.

Paul is the one who taught that. The prayers of others for us can bring great power into our lives and bring great spiritual strength in difficult circumstances. We need people praying for us and we need to pray for others. Paul knew that was a key to him finishing life in a praiseworthy way.

INGREDIENT #2 – A joyful, Christ-exalting, non-ashamed life requires the power of God’s Spirit. **1:19b**

The Holy Spirit was important to the Apostle Paul and it is critical to this book of Philippians.

- 1) Paul identifies the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ (**1:19b**).
- 2) Paul identifies the Holy Spirit as being the Spirit that produces fellowship (2:1).
- 3) Paul identifies the Holy Spirit as being the Spirit of God (3:3).

I also think that Paul alludes to the fact that it is the Holy Spirit that actually is involved in producing unity (1:27).

A life that does not end up being ashamed is one that requires a continual connection to God’s Spirit.

When Paul mentions the “provision” of the Spirit, he uses an interesting Greek word. It is a word that means one must have a provision of the Spirit that is over and above the normal supply level.

In other words, just because one is a believer and has God’s Spirit does not automatically mean one will not end up ashamed and end up with a life that is bold and praiseworthy.

Now Paul was very clear in his other writings that there are at least three keys to having a life that demonstrates the power of the Spirit of God:

Way #1 - A life does not grieve the Holy Spirit. 4:30

If a believer is to have a life that does not end up ashamed, he must stop continually doing things that cause pain, distress and grief to the Spirit of God.

Way #2 - A life that does not quench the Holy Spirit. I Thess. 5:19

If a believer is to have a life that does not end up ashamed, he must stop continually doing things that quenches or puts out the fire for God and His Word.

Way #3 - A life that does yield to the Holy Spirit. Rom. 6:13

The word “yield” literally means to present your mind beside something. Spirituality has to do with the focus of your mind. If a believer is to have a life that does not end up ashamed, he must get his thinking in line with the Holy Spirit.

Now in order to have a life that exalts Christ and is not ashamed, we need to work in harmony with God’s Spirit.

It is interesting to me that Paul never believed in his own ability to achieve this. He knew he needed the prayers of God’s people and the Holy Spirit to achieve this success. There is no emphasis at all on what he thought his will was capable of doing.

INGREDIENT #3 – A joyful, Christ-exalting, non-ashamed life requires a proper expectation and hope. **1:20-21**

If we want to finish life not being ashamed, we have to focus on that objective. Paul’s hope was that he would finish bold and strong for Jesus Christ. His hope and expectation was that he would not finish ashamed.

The words “earnest expectation” describe a deep, eager, longing of the heart, which stretches toward something. The heart longing of Paul was that he would not end up ashamed. He did not want to be a disappointment to God.

Paul did not want to end up a disappointment for God. He knew he might die and he also knew he had the potential of not finishing well. The Apostle John believed the same thing. He believed we could face Jesus Christ and be confident or face him and be ashamed (I John 2:28).

No matter what happened to his body, life or death, he did not want to be a disappointment. He wanted Jesus Christ to be exalted whether he lived or died.

That was his great ambition in life, to exalt Jesus Christ. May this be our passion as well.

Now to finish in a way that does not end up being ashamed, we need three things:

- 1) We need a personal desire to not be ashamed. This needs to be our earnest expectation and hope.
- 2) We need to rely on the provision of the Holy Spirit.
- 3) We need prayer. We need to pray and we need to pray for each other.

It is critical that we pray and ask God to not let us end up ashamed before Him. We need to be praying that for ourselves and for each other.

J. Dwight Pentecost was so moved by this passage that he asked his congregation to take out a piece of paper and write this: "For to me to live is _____." Then he said, honestly fill in the blank.