

REDEEMING THE DISRUPTION

For what outcome are you hoping? As this is written, we want COVID-19 to end. We want to go back to worshipping and meeting together. We want to go back to work. We want those who are sick to be well. We want those who are isolated to be reconnected. We want to sit across the table again with our friends. We want the quarantine to end.

For a man in prison, the no-brainer hope would be release, right? Who in their right mind would think any different?! As we see this week, Paul's desired outcome was complicated by his gospel-loving, Christ-exalting perspective. It's as if his life's circumstances were entirely secondary—the consequence of someone who exclaims, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." We should wonder, *how would that kind of perspective alter our own desired outcomes?*

Main Text: Philippians 1:18b ("Yes, and I will rejoice,") to 30

CONNECT

1. How has this past week gone for you? Are there any new struggles or needs that you're experiencing?
2. What did you take away from last Sunday's sermon? Was something especially significant, inspiring, confusing, or helpful?

LEARN & OBSERVE

1. Read verses 18b-26. To what things might a prisoner be looking to for help? How do those compare with what Paul says in verse 19 that he is relying on for "deliverance"?
2. What is Paul's "eager expectation and hope" expressed in verses 20-26? How can Christ be honored in Paul, "whether by life or by death"?
3. Not to sound morbid, but difficult circumstances or even a bad day can make us think, "Jesus, take me home!" How would you explain the difference between that kind of a feeling and Paul's words in verse 21: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"?
4. Read verses 27-30. The word "worthy" in verse 27 relates to being a citizen acting "in community and for the good of the community."¹ It includes enjoying the benefits of citizenship, but also taking on the responsibilities of citizenship. From these verses (27-30), what are some of these benefits and responsibilities?

APPLY

1. As we think about verse 19, what role should human prayers and the Spirit's help have in our "deliverance" during these days? What else might we be looking to for help, perhaps in a way that is not well aligned with a complete reliance upon God?

¹ Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, vol. 43 of Word Biblical Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 69.

2. Paul sought to honor Christ no matter the outcome of his circumstances. In your life today, how would this kind of attitude reshape your desires and impact your prayer life?

3. Paul saw his life's purpose in terms of benefiting the faith of others (look again at verses 24-25). How is/should that purpose also true of each of us as we are in community with each other?

4. A life that's "worthy of the gospel of Christ" is directly linked to living in unity with each other (verses 27-28). What kind of commitments, sacrifices, or costs are required for us to live in unity as a church?

5. Most of us naturally do what we can to avoid suffering, but Paul speaks of it as something "granted" to us by God in verse 29. How can this help us reevaluate suffering in our own lives?²

² It's worth noting a couple of related points: First, the word "you" in these verses is plural, not singular. Suffering is understood to be something the Philippian believers experience together, not in isolation. Second, remember back to Acts 9:4 when Paul (Saul) heard the words, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" when Saul was persecuting the church. Jesus' association with our suffering is something we should remind each other of regularly.