



## Partners in the Gospel

May 21, 2017

### The Partnership Choices - Part 2

*Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. <sup>20</sup> I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! <sup>23</sup> I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; <sup>24</sup> but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.*

### The Partnership Choices - Part 2

**Partners in the Gospel** - Throughout this letter - written in a style known in the ancient world as a "friendship letter" - Paul adopts a form of communication and adapts it to the message of Jesus. Learn even from how Paul wrote the letter - Paul used the conventions of his culture without changing his convictions about the Gospel.

In writing a friendship letter - introduce all the people involved - those writing the letter and those receiving the letter. Letter began with thanksgiving - "I thank my God every time I think of you! - <sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now. Paul uses the style of a friendship letter - a much deeper relationship - Partners in the Gospel!

Then the letter goes on to describe the circumstances of the one writing the letter - this is the section we have been exploring last week and today. Last week, we learned that Paul's circumstance - being imprisoned for a charge related to his preaching of Jesus - prompted him to make choices.

***As Partners in the Gospel, we have choices to make***

#### Quick Review -

**The Choice to Cooperate!** Paul chose to cooperate with Jesus in his circumstance. Chained to a Roman Soldier - up to six different soldiers in a day - Paul chose to cooperate with Jesus and speak about Jesus. The Gospel began to make an inroad among the soldiers!

**The Choice to Celebrate!** - But, Paul's imprisonment also proved to be a time for others to begin to compete with Paul in of all things - telling the story of Jesus.

**The Choice for Courage!** Courage - in spite of my circumstance, I am choosing to not let fear dictate the outcome of my circumstances! Courage breaks the chain of fear!

What do we humans fear the most? Show of hands - snakes? mice? Insects in all there various forms? How about... lions and tigers and bears? Oh my!

For the most part - we fear what is or appears to be out of our control! For many, speaking in public is a great fear!

^In recent weeks, a couple of The Orchard's small groups have been studying the Book of Philippians. One of the groups is attended by Nicole Allen.

Courage! Your being willing to share shows me your courage!

1. Have you ever been imprisoned for your faith in Jesus? Have you ever been imprisoned? Have you ever been in a circumstance that significantly felt like a "prison" to you - limited options, other people seemingly in control, not sure how to get out of the circumstance?

2. How did fear play a part in the circumstance you just shared? Who or what did God bring into your life to give you courage in your "prison"?

**Circumstances happened to Paul** - God was in Paul's circumstances, at times, even in control of Paul's circumstances. His circumstance was that he was in prison, chained to a Roman soldier.

Make the choice for courage - seems almost impossible!

Listen to how Paul described his circumstance...

*Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, <sup>19</sup>for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.*

Is our courage just something we choose, some feeling on steroids that we do our best to exercise? Not for the follower of Jesus... Look at how Paul saw beyond his fear -

1. Others have faced similar circumstances.

The last phrase of verse 19 is almost a word for word quotation of another Biblical character who was facing some really difficult circumstances, many events beyond his control. Paul is quoting Job. Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance - Job 13:16 In part, we make the choice for courage when we recognize, I am not alone in my struggles, in my circumstances. Others have faced their fears and made the choice for courage.

2. The prayers of the Philippians

Paul had courage because of his partners in prayer. *for I know that through your prayers*

I am increasingly believing that the intersection between heaven and earth is most clearly located, the power of the cross is most greatly appropriated, the joy of following Jesus is most thoroughly experienced when I... pray. When I come to the end of me - realize I can't live life on my own and I pray, when I forsake all the idols I have believed will help me and I **pray** to the only wise and merciful God, when I join Jesus in the revolution of the cross and take up my cross and follow him... when I follow Jesus in praying, "not my will, but your will be done", when I simply pray and enter into each day in an attitude of prayer.

^breath prayers - a phrase, a prayer short enough that I can say it in one breath - spoken out loud or in the quiet of my heart. I am choosing courage in trusting God more than I trust myself.

3. Courage? I am not alone in my fears; others are praying for me; God is with me. Listen to how Paul speaks of God's presence with him... God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (The grammar assumes the closest kind of relationship between their prayer and the supply of the Spirit.)

Let's understand what Paul is not saying about the Spirit of God that has arisen from this text this morning... *God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*

Confusion? Paul's description of the Spirit of Jesus Christ... is there another Spirit beside the Holy Spirit. Nope! The Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus Christ are one in the same.

The Spirit of Jesus Christ - why then does Paul describe the Holy Spirit this way? Gordon Fee writes...

The reason for this unusual qualifier lies in the context. Paul's concern throughout the "explanation" is on Christ and the gospel. Paul knows that Christ will be glorified in his life or death only as he is filled with the Spirit of Christ himself. That is, it is Christ resident in him by the Spirit who will be the cause of Paul's— and therefore the gospel's— not being brought to shame and of Christ's being magnified through him. Thus this phrase, "the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," is not incidental. Here is the key to Christ's being glorified in every way: by Paul's being "supplied" the Spirit of Jesus Christ himself, who will live powerfully through Paul as he stands trial. At the same time, from such a phrase and its close relationship with the prayer of the believing community, one learns a great deal about Paul's own spiritual life and his understanding of the role of the Spirit in that life. He simply does not think of Christian life as lived in isolation from others. He may be the one in prison and headed for trial; but the Philippians— and others— are inextricably bound together with him through the Spirit. Therefore, he assumes that their praying, and with that God's gracious supply of the Spirit of his Son, will be the means God uses yet once more to bring glory to himself through Paul and Paul's defense of the gospel (vv. 7, 16)

### **Choices happened in Paul -**

In the midst of his circumstances, Paul had courage for the choices happening in him and the choices happening to him. Let me read the text once more. As you read along in the notes or in your Scripture, listen for what Paul had under his control in his circumstance.

What did Paul have under his control in his circumstances?

*<sup>20</sup> I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! <sup>23</sup> I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; <sup>24</sup> but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.*

## **Courage happened through Paul**

Some of the choices were made by Paul; some were made for him - in all - *will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*

I believe Paul lets us into his heart in these words of a friendship letter. I hear some of the reality of trusting Jesus even when he doesn't know the outcome. I hear him choosing to be courageous amidst the many circumstances beyond his control.

I hear the prayers of the Philippians and the presence of the Spirit of Jesus Christ strengthening him with a bond so much stronger than the chains of his Roman captors. I hear a person whose whole focus in life is Jesus, his every waking moment filled with the gospel... I hear a person captured by Jesus, held not by chains, but by his choice to partner with Jesus.

In the midst of prison, listen to Paul's courage unlocking all the circumstances closing in on him... For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain!

^ Finish our time today... put into practice some of what we have heard here today... in Nicole's story and in the story of Paul's partnership with the church at Philippi, with the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the prayers of God's people...

In just a moment, I am going to ask anyone here whose present circumstances feel like "prison" to you - limited options, other people seemingly in control, not sure how to get out of the circumstance, the doors closing around you sound too much like prison doors - I am going to ask you to stand. If you are not able to stand, simply raise your hand.

In a very real sense, I am asking you to be courageous and let others around you know that you are hurting, that you are feeling broken, that you are in need of Jesus. It takes courage to put yourself out there!

We are going to be a partner with you by praying for you. You don't have to describe your circumstance. Your willingness to stand, to raise your hand tells us enough about you for us to pray for you. Here's what we are going to pray, "Father, be pleased to give courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in \_\_\_\_\_'s life. Spirit of Jesus, please fill \_\_\_\_\_ with hope, with faith and with courage!" I will lead us in this prayer.

Here's how we are going to pray, with the permission of the person who is standing or has raised a hand, we are going to be the hands and feet of Jesus, we are going to be the heart of God for our brothers and sisters, we are going to be instruments of the Holy Spirit.

So,... let all the "prisoners" among us stand or raise a hand. Let the rest of us move to those closest to you. Make sure you know their name. Get acquainted with your partner in the Gospel. Then, I will lead us in prayer... if the Spirit of Jesus is prompting you to continue in prayer after we have prayed together, check with the person you are praying for if you can continue in prayer...then keep praying.

OK - Orchard Christian Fellowship... be the people of God partnering with those among us who feel imprisoned by their circumstances.

I will pray the words aloud; you follow after me...

Father, be pleased to give courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in \_\_\_\_\_'s life. Spirit of Jesus, please fill \_\_\_\_\_ with hope, with faith and with courage!"