

Philippians 10-04-23b

Let's resume our study now in Philippians chapter 1. Now we're going to get into something really interesting. You may not have been interested in French or artillery or any of the things we talked about in the first lesson, but this is really interesting to me. If it's not to you, well, you're just going to have to suffer because I find it fascinating.

We need a little bit of background for this next section of Philippians. This is something I did not know. I've had seminary and books, reading endlessly, and I did not, I feel like Johnny Carton, I did not know that.

But this is what I didn't know. In the Greek-speaking world, the great philosophers, you remember Plato and then you had Aristotle and you had Socrates. These guys literally wrote the book on how to think in the ancient world, and they were 300 years before the time of the Apostle Paul.

And so this was ubiquitous. Now remember in Philippi, what is the Philippian church proud of? What are the Philippian people, the citizens of Philippi, what's their big hoop-dee-doo? We're Romans. Even though we're a small town, we've got that full Roman citizenship thing.

We are Greekified, Romified, Roman citizen, they really take a lot of pride in that. So naturally, they would have imbibed this Greek ethos, the Greek perspective, the Greek way of thinking about life. It's just like if you grow up in this country today, if you're alive in our country today, there are certain definitional things, particularly here in this country, in America, there are certain things that are definitional.

Everybody knows in this time, American Idol. Nobody does not know American Idol. You can't escape it.

You can't get away from it if you tried. MTV, music videos, MP3s, the internet, blogs, and Facebook and Twitter and so on. There are certain things that are just a part of the culture.

If you want to be able to get around, if you want to be able to converse, you have to know Avatar and you have to know Harry Potter and you have to know certain things or you just can't carry on a conversation. You're going to miss cultural references. You're going to not know what's going on.

Do you feel me? So same thing in Philippi in the ancient world. They knew the Greek stuff cold. It had been around for centuries and things didn't drift and move so quickly in those days.

It would take a century or so for big ideas to catch on and become ubiquitous. Well, it had been three centuries. So everybody knew Plato and Aristotle and Socrates.

So who I want to talk about here for a second is Aristotle. Aristotle took the stuff of Plato and spread it around. We want to talk about the view.

The guy was prolific. He wrote and wrote and wrote and wrote. Nearly everything he wrote is lost, which is a caution.

You don't want your life's work to be something that's losable. He just knocked himself out, spent his whole life philosophizing and writing and it's all largely lost. Mostly what we have left over is his lecture notes from his classes and some things that his students took down.

When you think about the soul and you think about the body, this is what we're getting at because Paul is going to talk about life and death and his soma, his body. Throughout the Pauline letters, we have references to body and we're going to look at those in a minute. But for context, for background, if I am the Apostle Paul and I'm writing a letter to these people in Philippi and I say soma, S-O-M-A, body, what are they going to take that for? What is it going to mean to them? It isn't going to mean to them what it means to us.

We say body and there's body art, which is tattoos. There's body sculpting, which is liposuction. We've got body this, we've got body that.

We've got booty. We have all different kinds of things that reference the body. That's our culture.

That's our context. In the ancient world, in the Greek world, when you say soma, it was conditioned by the Platonic Aristotelian view and this is what that was. You can find this in almost any standard reference, but Aristotle got most of his ideas from Plato and basically they saw the body as the container created by the soul.

The soul sort of exists and it needs a mode of expression and so it kind of brings the body into being. It's an energy. The soul is an energy and when you're born, the soul kind of puts out this body and when the body dies, they didn't think of a corporeal, individual, sentient soul with its memories and its frame of reference and everything surviving death, they thought that that energy without memory kind of got released back into the big energy pool or something.

I'm grossly summarizing and flattening out a lot of philosophy here because I want to get to this one point. So, they thought of personhood, human beings, as you have an ensouled body. Your body is a, your being has been ensouled and that's what they called it.

It's Epsoukan Soma, Epsoukan, psoukan, psyche, it's a Greek word for soul, psouke. En means ensouled. You've got a body that has been ensouled.

The soul is embodied, so to speak. This is the way they view it and this is important because in this big, vast, cavernous ocean liner of philosophy, which I waded through in school, I reviewed it this week, and every time you think of me you should give thanks to God because I'm not going to repeat it here. I'm just going to say that their view of life was, what's the point of life? Here you are, you're an ensouled body, you're an Epsoukan Soma, so what's the deal? What's the point? Why be alive? What are you striving for? Well, oddly enough, it's a lot like what you get in modern

psychology when they talk about Maslow's hierarchy of needs and how you climb the rungs of meeting your basic needs.

What are you striving for? Self-actualization. You want to be at the point where you are truly happy. They said, well, you've got three different levels of souliness.

You've got the basic, fundamental, nutritive soul. Even plants have this. People claim that some plants, you tear a leaf of an elephant ear and in some way it kind of cries out.

Its little plant soul cries out. Plants supposedly shrink away from people that have gone by and shredded them. They put electrodes on them and they say, okay, let's have Fred come in and he's going to shred this leaf, and then they put electrodes on the plant and the next time Fred walks by they get readings.

The Greeks believed in this and they said this is the nutritive soul. Plants have a kind of awareness, a kind of sentience. It's a low level, it's what they call the nutritive soul.

This is also down at the bottom of Maslow's basic needs, food, clothing, reproductive urge and all that's down at the basic level. Well, this is the nutritive soul. It underlies reproduction and drives hunger and the taking of nourishment.

Babies have this. Then, the medium level is the sensitive soul. Not sensitive soul like, oh, isn't he a sensitive soul? But the soul of the sensate soul.

This is where you have hearing and sight and touch and movement. Plants basically stop at the nutritive soul level. They don't see, they don't hear, supposedly.

Animals move up to the second soul level. They've got the nutritive soul and the sensate or sensitive soul. They can move around and hear, see, smell and so forth.

That contributes to survival and well-being. Your dog is happy when he can do these things. Then you have the highest level of soul is man's soul.

This is where you get the, it's characterized by reason or intellect. That's the noose. When you see the word noose in the Greek New Testament, it's got some Greek baggage behind it.

They're saying this is the highest level. This is what separates man from the animals, the noose, the intellect. You have theoretical and practical thinking that takes place.

Dogs, cats generally don't do much of this theoretical thinking. Practical thinking is just limited to mechanical things. Aristotle also noticed that once you get into the realm of people that have got all three levels of soul, you can distinguish between active noose and a passive intellect idea.

The active noose, he called this *poion*. Remember *poio*, to make or to do? The active soul is *poioing*. It's making and doing things.

It's making a difference. What's the point of life to an atheist? Well, I'm going to make a difference. I'm only here for a short time.

I want to leave a legacy. I want to build a monument. I want to make a difference.

I want to have an impact. I want to leave something behind so that I will be remembered. This is ta poion.

This is the active noose. Aristotle said there is also a passive intellect, which he called the noose pathetikos. The pathetic noose.

Of course, it's not pathetic in the sense that we say pathetic. Pathos is the feeling or sense of empathy and that sort of thing. So, with all of this, here's the deal.

The point of taking care of your body, the point of nurturing your active noose, is to achieve your personal sense of well-being. I live, I act, I move, I plan, I purpose everything I do. If I am the ideal man in the Platonic, Aristotelian, Socratic world, the best man, the fulfilled man, the actualized man has woven together his ensouled body to achieve that goal.

I have satisfaction. I've satisfied all three levels of my soul. I have an active noose.

I'm making a difference. It's self-actualization. It's just like Maslow.

This is the philosophy. All of the pagan Greeks had the gods and so on, but that was kind of like a soap opera. It was kind of like Peyton Place or 90210 or whatever the new version of Peyton Place is.

There are shows now that purport to be history. They purport to be King Henry or somebody, or they purport to be Spartacus, or they purport to be one thing or another. From the commercials, it looks to me like they're just soap operas in historical drag.

They just set all of these conflicts and interpersonal rivalries and pettinesses, and I got you. It's no different than Dr. Kildare. I used to get sick and have to stay at home, and my grandmother would watch Dr. Kildare as the world turns, or One Life to Live, or General Hospital, or one of these.

Just the mind-numbing lack of action. Somebody said a thing, and somebody goes and tells somebody else what they said, and then somebody says, well, you know, this is what I say. So that's the passive noose.

That doesn't get anything done. Active accomplishes something. This is the goal.

This is what people expected. These Greeks, their pantheon, they didn't look at their gods the way Christians look at the God of the universe, or the way Muslims look at Allah as an individual,

active deity that is all-powerful and really makes a difference. It was a very casual thing for them.

They kind of went through the motions. It was sort of a cultural... It was like watching TV for them, and oh yeah, well, you know, Bacchus, the god of wine, and Aphrodite, and we'll light a few candles and offer some oblations and celebrate a lot of feasts. It was kind of like a secular Christmas, or a secular holiday of some other kind.

Firecrackers at the Fourth of July. They weren't really invested in their religion. What they were invested in was this philosophy.

I want to achieve the best that I can be in my body, which will in turn make my ensouled self the best that it can be. That's what they're thinking. Now, that's the background.

I could belabor that, but I'm not going to, because... Look at what Paul says. He's in prison. His body's in prison, but the gospel is shining forth.

He says, my earnest expectation, in verse 20, and hope is that in nothing I shall be ashamed. I'm going to be delivered. Your prayer and the provision that the Holy Spirit makes for me, this is what separates us.

You know, what separates man from the animals? We can think higher thoughts. What separates believers from unbelievers? What separates knowledgeable, faithful believers from the vast majority of believers who are apathetic, indifferent, and unaware of what they're supposed to be doing in Christ? What separates? It is the active ministry of the Holy Spirit. Not in a lot of hand-flapping, not in a lot of shenanigans, not in a lot of theater.

In practical provision. Paul says, my earnest expectation and hope is that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but in all boldness, as always, also now, Christ will be magnified. Christ will be made great.

This doesn't sound like much. This is kind of at the end of this big long sentence that it takes two breaths to read in English. But in Greek, this is kind of a shocker.

Because the language, the vocabulary, is the same as Greeks use when they're talking about themselves. I don't want to be ashamed so that in all things I will be satisfied. So that in all things I will accomplish.

I will achieve. My noose and my soma are going to collaborate together to make me the best that I can be. Paul says, I don't want to be ashamed in anything, but with the same boldness I've always had, Christ will be magnified in my soma.

This flies in the face of the culture, flies in the face of the philosophy, flies in the face of 300 years of Platonic, Aristotelian, Socratic thinking. No, no, no, I'm not here for some third party to be glorified. They didn't live their lives to glorify Zeus or Venus or anybody else.

They were trying to get themselves to this highest level of attainment. This was sort of a self-deification, and that's how it is described. Those are the terms that it philosophically is described as.

When Paul says, I want these things to turn out for good, and Christ is going to be magnified in my body. I don't know how to get it across in English, but this is like a mind-blowing concept for this Greek culture. They'd never heard of a god being glorified by somebody's, I mean the gods might try to, Hercules might glorify himself, or one of these other parties might go off and in some story he might cover himself with glory by defeating some adversary or whatever, but there was no interaction between people and their gods, small g. When it comes to my soma and when it comes to my nous, I'm in it for me, number one.

That's the point of life, get myself magnified up there. This word that's translated magnified is a great word, it's megaluno, mega you get the drift of, but it's used for making something larger. You remember when Jesus was talking about the Pharisees and how they're always trying to glorify themselves, and he said they do their deeds to be seen by men, and he said they broaden their phylacteries, their little wrappings, you know they would wrap a little piece of the law on their hand or on their head, well I'm not sure you can see that, I'm going to get a bigger strap, I'm going to make it bigger, to be sure you understand what a religiously observant Jew I am, and they lengthen the tassels on their garments.

The law says to put a tassel, I'm just going to put the biggest honking tassel that I can drag around on my garment, so you'll be sure to know how holy I am. Well the word there for lengthening the tassel is megaluno, I enlarge it to the maximum extent, and that's how it's used in the literal sense. Paul uses it in 2 Corinthians 10.15, and he says, we are not boasting beyond our measure, that is in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be within our sphere enlarged even more by you.

And it's a different view of the same idea. If Paul has done a good job in training and teaching the believers in Corinth, they will vindicate his apostolic ministry as they grow in their labors and in their faith, he says we within our apostolic sphere are going to be magnified, we're going to be emphasized. People are going to say, wow, that Apostle Paul must be on to something because look at the results in that church.

Look at their faith, look at their love for one another, look at the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in that group. We need to take another look at what this Paul is teaching because this is really something extraordinary. Well, that's the word that he uses here, and he says, as always, Christ will be made large, made prominent, made noticeable.

These tassels on the garment, when you make them bigger, it attracts attention. And Paul is hooking back into that earlier idea. He said, you know, the reason I'm going to choose to rejoice about all of this defugal things about Christ is, Christ is being preached.

And he says, whatever happens to me, Christ is going to continue to be center stage. He's going to be made the focus. He is going to be emphasized.

He is going to be made large. The bigger something is, the harder it is to ignore. He won't be ignored.

He'll be the issue. In my body, in my soma, and this word soma is something we need to take a quick look at, because it had a lot of meanings back in the Old Testament when it was translated into the Septuagint. The Old Testament view was pretty much, you're one thing.

You are your body. When your body dies, you die. It was kind of a two-dimensional view.

But when you get to the Greek culture, and it impacts the Jews, you have things like when Paul talks in 1 Corinthians 9.27, he says, I discipline my soma, I make it my servant, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. And you get the idea that there is an existence that transcends the body. Paul says, I discipline my body.

I buff it. The word is literally buff it, and it's used of boxers. In the ancient world, they didn't have Everlast with these big puffy gloves, and so when they were going to box, if you look at the drawings from those days, the boxers, of course, they didn't wear anything, but they would wrap leather straps around their hands, and that was their boxing gloves.

So they would put one end of the strap in here, wrap it a couple times around their knuckles, and put the other end in, and then clench their fist, and hold on to the leather over their knuckles, and that was it. And then they would buff it one another. They would pummel one another.

Well, that word for pummel, punch with a leather strap, is the word Paul uses here. I punch my body. I pound it.

I beat it into submission. And I make it my slave. This sounds a little disrespectful, you know, we're all into trying to get our antioxidants and our fiber and whatever else it is, you know, try to preserve your cartilage, and we try to coddle and nurture and comfort our body.

Paul says, I just beat that thing into submission. I make it my slave. What's he talking about? It's the old way of life.

Unbelievers and faithless believers can only live in the body. I'm hungry. I'm going to eat.

I'm tired. I'm going to be cranky. I'm thirsty.

I'm going to drink. I'm lusty. I'm going to satisfy my lust in whatever area.

And it drives the train. The body kind of drags the mind and soul along behind it, saying, you know, fulfill my needs. I'm operating on level one of the hierarchy.

Paul says, no, I rise above that. Where does the power come from to do it? It's not just will. That guy that gets on the telethon every year on PBS, and what's his name, now all of his hair is gone.

He's bald. He looks like Mr. Clean. He used to have a mustache.

Who is that guy? He's always talking about the spirit masters, and he just treats Jesus the same as Confucius. No, he's another one of the same ilk. I'll think of it in a minute.

It's got D's in it. Anyway, it doesn't matter. I've flushed him from the recesses of my mind.

But the whole thing is that these philosophy things, self-improvement, and they talk a great fight. And while you're sitting there in the seminar, it just sounds so great. He describes ways to rise above the fray, and to be calm, and to keep your peace, and chant your mantra, or whatever it is, and that all sounds great until you leave and go home and find out that the dog just chewed up your favorite pair of new shoes that cost \$450, or somebody has keyed your car or run into it in the street, or some actual stress hits you, and all of this fine stuff goes out the window.

Where is the power? This is the point. Where is the power to actually be different, actually live differently? Paul is talking about that, and he says, I am going to live boldly, as always. This was referenced years ago when they said, if you only go around once in life, then grab for the gusto, and we ought to live with gusto.

Whatever you do, do it heartily, the Bible says, as unto the Lord. If you are going to do a thing, do it well. If somebody says, clean the latrine, well, clean it like it has never been cleaned before.

If somebody says, dig, then dig better than anybody has ever dug before. Shine it, paint it, polish it, wash it, dry it, mow it. Whatever it is we are going to do, we should do it with enthusiasm.

Paul says, look, my expectation and hope is that when the judgment comes, I will not be ashamed. I will not be embarrassed. I will not be measured and found to have fallen short.

But, and it says, with all boldness here. This is by means of boldness, in passe paresia, in, in boldness, by means of boldness. Christ is going to be magnified.

Christ is not magnified when we wilt, when we fade, when we collapse, when we are the big marshmallow. Christ is magnified. Christ is glorified when we are hearty, when we are enthusiastic, when we are bold, all boldness, with all boldness, as always.

So now also, just as it has been in the past, so now also, Christ will be magnified in my soma, whether by life or by death. And this is the thing, the Aristotelian view was, you live your life in your ensouled soma, and you've got to live a good life, you've got to have that active noose, and get stuff done, and be admired, and be respected, and build yourself up. But, that's not enough.

You have to die well. To really finish up, you've got to die well. It's no good to be a great guy, and

then, you know, get hit by a stray mule kick.

You're walking down the street, and some mule kicks, and you die. Well, that just spoils the whole thing. They really had a thing about dying well.

This is why so many of them who were in leadership positions, when everything turned sour, they would try to kill themselves and fall on their sword, or, you know, I don't want to be torn apart by the mob. I'll take my own life, because I've got to finish well. I want to die in battle.

I want to die like a gladiator. I want to die, you know, in combat. I want to die with my boots on.

They felt like you could spoil all the effort of your life if you died poorly. Somebody poisons you, what an indignity. You know, you got fooled.

Your life ended on a false note. You were hornswoggled. You were betrayed.

So, when Paul says, Christ is going to be magnified in my Soma, whether by life or by death, this takes, he's referencing, he is consciously, I promise you, he's consciously referencing their culture and turning it on its head. And he's got like a half smile on his face when he says this, because he's flying in the face of the common Greek expectation that you magnify yourself and you want to live well and you want to die well for your own sake, to finish off your life, so when your energy leaves and goes back, you've had a fitting existence. He says, I want Christ to be magnified, whether by life or by death.

Then you have this famous, famous, famous verse, Philippians 121, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. I printed this out and left it on the printer, but there is a copy of it in the Philippians folder on our web server, our church server, where you get the Bible classes, our FTP server. If you go to the Philippians folder, there's handouts under there, and I guess what I will do is just tell you what it is.

Maybe I can show it to you here. What I want to show you is, here's a book called Helping Friends and Harming Enemies, A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics. This is a recent book.

You can buy it at Amazon. Oh, it's okay, I'm just going to turn it around and show it right here. But this is a page out of this book.

It's about Sophocles, you know, Sophocles, Greek playwright and so on. This is a book all about that. They've got a reference page in the beginning of the book to help you understand it because obviously he's a Greek playwright, they've got to talk about Greek stuff.

The author here, who is Mary Whitlock Blundell, I'm not recommending this book by the way, I only like it for one page, and this is the page. The following Greek words are used in transliteration. Note, most words ending in "-os", have plurals in "-oi".

You know this already. Houtos, Houtoi, Anthropos, Anthropoi, that's what she's saying. And then there's this little reference page here.

And see, here's Agathos. You know what that is, Greek word for good. So as you're reading about Sophocles' plays, they're just going to transliterate this.

This is the Agathos. Here's Idos, here's Isclos, here's Iscune, here's Arete, here's Aristos, here's Charis. C-H-A-R-I-S, the word for grace.

It's in Sophocles, she's going to talk about it. And then here's a word here, Krestos. C-H-R-E-S-T-O-S.

And for each of these words, there's a little short definition. So Krestos, C-H-R-E-S-T-O-S, right here, says worthwhile or good. Krestos, Greek word, C-H-R-E-S-T-O-S, worthwhile or good.

On the same page, if you work your way down to the K's, is the word Kerdos, K-E-R-D-O-S. And these are conveniently highlighted in yellow on the bitmap of this that I saved in your handouts folder. Kerdos is profit, comma, gain.

These are the two words in Philippians 121. These are the two words. For me, to live is Krestos, to die is Kerdos.

It is not Krestos. All of the Greek manuscripts and dead seas of Bibles and commentaries notwithstanding, I'm telling you, it is not Krestos. There have been many articles written on the common confusion of Krestos and Christos in the ancient world.

When you go over to Peter and he says, taste and see that the Lord is good, and he's quoting Psalm 34, taste and see that the Lord is good, taste and see that the Lord is Krestos, C-H-R-E-S-T-O-S. Half the New Testament manuscripts taste and see that the Lord is Christ. Half the Greek manuscripts have got Krestos converted to Christos, because manuscripts were copied by one scribe reading the master out loud and three or four other guys copying.

And the guy is speaking Greek. Some of these people didn't even know Greek to understand it. They just knew to write the words.

And so the guy says, Krestos, and it just, oh, Christ. And so it came out, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. A lot of people, countless thousands of Christians have said that's my life verse, for me to live is Christ.

Well, it's a noble sentiment, nothing wrong with the idea of it, but that's not what the verse says. Krestos, worthwhile or good? Paul says, look, whether I live or whether I die, I want Christ to be magnified in my soma, in my existence, my Greek worldview impression left on this earth. For me to live is worthwhile, Krestos, to die is gain, it's profit, it's an improvement.

When I'm alive, it's good, and when I die, it's better, Krestos. That's our verse. And he goes on to explain this, and it makes perfect sense in the context.

Verse 22, if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor. Yet what I shall choose I cannot tell, for I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. That's your keredos, your gain, your profit, right? Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

There is no doubt, and people who refuse to acknowledge this point are just hidebound and stuck in tradition. Look at what Paul says, I have a desire to depart and be with Christ. If to live is Christ, why would you want to depart and be with Christ? You're already there.

If to live is Christ, then departing can't be a gain, right? It can't be. It's illogical. It's irrational.

It just makes hash out of the passage. For me, to live is worthwhile, and to die is gain. Paul says, I've got it good both ways.

I would love to go and be with Christ, that would be gain, but it is needful for me to deny myself that gain and stay here with you. It's to your benefit. To remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

Now you think back, we've spent some time reviewing the relationship that Paul has with these Philippian believers, and it's like a father for his children. There are people who have been more or less on their deathbed, but they really want to see some far off child one more time before they check out, and they will hang on. It's painful, it's unpleasant, but I want to see my son before I die.

Willpower is one of the most critical factors for people that are in intensive care, and you don't know what their status is going to be. People can will themselves to live in amazing ways, and even though they're suffering, if they have a reason to keep going, they will do so. It's just extraordinary.

Guys on the battlefield that have been mortally wounded have a sense of mission, and they just will not quit. They will not give up. As long as they've got enough blood pressure to stay conscious, they will continue the mission.

They will stay on the radio. They will keep directing their men. If you read the roster of the Medal of Honor winners in the Marine Corps especially, we keep track of Manila John Bassalone and some of these other guys, and when you read what they did, it is willpower.

This is Paul's idea. He loves the people in Philippi. He would love to check out.

He would love to get out from under the stress and the beatings and the imprisonment and the misery and the daily care of all the churches and the things that he lists elsewhere, but he says, even though for me personally, I would rather go, I recognize that it is more needful for you, and

this is a classic expression, a classic illustration of love that is sacrificial toward self and beneficial toward others. Paul would, it's a funny thing to say, but he says here, I'd be better off dead. To die would be a gain for me, but it is more needful for you that I remain in the flesh.

And, verse 25, being confident of this, I know that I shall remain. How does Paul know that he is not going to be executed, even though he is potentially, he is on trial for his life. He is in prison because it's a capital offense.

And he says, you know, I could get the death sentence out of this, and I wouldn't mind. I could go be with Christ. But he says, I know that it's more needful for me to be here with you.

My work as an apostle is not yet done. My teaching ministry is not yet over. And because I am confident that that is the case, verse 25, I know I shall remain and continue with you.

Paul can predict the future. He already knows what the outcome of his trial is going to be before it happens. And it doesn't depend on the evidence, and it doesn't depend on how many witnesses perjure themselves, or how many Jews are irate, or how many Romans are upset.

Paul can see his life from the divine perspective, and because of that, he knows what to expect. This is our point of application. All the way through this chapter, what have we seen? We live our life in an unusual way.

We are believers. We understand why God has given us his word. We understand why the Holy Spirit is with us.

It's practical. We abound in love by means of our knowledge of what the Bible says, things like we're studying tonight, and it gives us perspective. It's really difficult sometimes to know what to do in a particular situation.

I can see it from a lot of different sides. I can't decide whether I should take this job or that job, buy this house or that house, go to this city or that city, attend this school or that school. You look over your life, and it's full of these path-altering, life-altering decision points.

Sometimes it's literally life and death depending on what you choose. How do you know what to do? Left to ourselves, we flip a coin. We wait for the default to kick in.

We let a wind blow us in one direction or another. We calculate and try to make the best decision we can. But as believers, we have a huge advantage.

Because of the eistasis, because of the perspective that comes from the Word of God and the Spirit of God, if we are patient like Paul, and we wait in hope and confident expectation that it's all going to issue forth out of the boat in our salvation, it's going to reflect our salvation. It's going to implement our salvation. It's going to work out our salvation for us.

God is at work to will and to do His good pleasure. And with that confidence, we begin to see, well, normally I wouldn't be able to tell the difference between these two options, but you know what? Because I understand my role as a husband and as a father, for me personally, I understand my role as a pastor or as someone who has an opportunity to serve in a particular area of ministry in my vocational work. It clarifies.

I can see things because of the spiritual perspective that would be totally opaque and wouldn't make a difference without that. And I would be indecisive. I couldn't live heartily.

I couldn't live boldly because I wouldn't know which way to step. Well, should I keep my IRA? Should I roll over to a gold base? Should I take out my retirement? Should I buy a house? I don't know what to do. I'm just like a big marshmallow rolling in the wind.

I don't know which way to go, and first thing you know, a big tire comes along and squashes me. I don't have any sense of purpose and sense of direction. I can't shift and sift priorities.

I can't establish my goals because it's just all kind of equal. Well, who can know? We can know. This is the gift that God gives us through Christ, through the Holy Spirit, through His Word.

We can know. Might have to be patient and wait a while, but it will clarify. And just like the Apostle Paul, our future is going to be deliverance, and it's going to come trooping off the boat.

We're not going to always be in this indecisive mode. We're not always going to be in this state of limbo. Paul could potentially think, well, you know, I'm just in limbo here.

I'm in prison. I can't be an apostle. I can't travel.

I can't preach. Jesus commissioned me to preach to the Gentiles, and here I am. I'm stuck with a Praetorian guard.

He says, you know what? I'm confident. I know God is leaving me here for a purpose. If He didn't want me to preach, I'd be dead.

I'm not dead, and there's plenty of people who still need the teaching. I know I'm not going to die. I am confident that I shall remain and continue with you for your progress and joy of faith.

There's that word joy again. You're going to progress. You're going to have joy in faith because God's going to keep me here to teach you some more good stuff.

So that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ. There's that more abundant again. You look at all these negative factors, and every time Paul looks at it, he says, I'm happy.

I'm in hope. I'm rejoicing. It's going to abound.

Christ is going to be magnified. I can live. I can die.

It's good either way, but I'll tell you now, I'm confident I'm going to stay here, and it's going to be good for you. It's not the best for me, but that's the nature of love. Sacrificial towards self.

Beneficial towards others. And Paul has confidence. He doesn't lay awake at night saying, boy, I wonder if the old... Is it going to be the sword? Or is it going to be the lions? Is it going to be a crucifixion? I wonder how they're going to kill me.

I wonder if they're going to... He says, they're not going to kill me. Look around. Look at God's people.

I'm the only apostle of the Gentiles out here. There's no way God's taking me out yet. Look at these poor Philippians.

They need this epistle to get written. They need some more teaching. God's not going to let these Romans slice my head off anytime soon.

I'm going to be around. And so he's confident, and he can make plans. He's free of the stress.

He's free of the worry. He's free of the what-ifs. You and I can live this very same way.

We have the Word of God. We have the Spirit of God. That's what it's for.

Not supposed to be a drudge. Not supposed to be a ritual. Not supposed to be a mindless tradition.

It's supposed to be energetic, powerful, motivating, compelling, strengthening, up-building, truth that clarifies, that enables, so that we can live lustily, and boldly, and heartily, as unto the Lord. What a great opportunity. That's what Paul gives us in Philippians chapter 1. That's what he's talking about.

And you look at his circumstance. Of all people to be talking about all of these positive things, anybody on the outside looking at him would say, you little bald-hooked-nosed Jew, you're all locked up there in the thing you can't travel, you can't preach. What are you talking about joy and boldness? You're locked up.

Can't see it from a human perspective. But Paul can see it from God's perspective, and it's just glowing in the dark for him. And for the Philippians, because they share his heart.

They've shared his fellowship in the Gospel from the beginning. Well, that's the first 26 verses. And that brings us to this new thought.

He's going to turn a corner here. He's been kind of leading them into this by talking about himself and his circumstance, filling them in on it, giving them a perspective on it. Verse 27, he's going to turn a little bit of a corner, and that's where we'll pick up next time.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You that You are faithful to provide for us, to encourage us, to not only call us to an extraordinary life, but to give us the means of living it.

We thank You most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ who opened the way for us to this life and to Your Kingdom and to all of the potentials that we have both now and in the ages to come. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts and keep them ever before our conscious thinking so that we will remember that we have a special calling and we have a unique opportunity and that we will avail ourselves of it and redeem the time even though the days are evil so that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified. We ask it in His name.

Amen.