

“Living Relying on the Work of Christ” Philippians 1:12-19

Today, we will take a look at Philippians 1:12-19.

Philippians 1:12-19.

¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

¹⁵ It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.

¹⁶ The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ¹⁸ But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹ 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.

< Introduction >

Brothers and sisters, have you been under a lot of stress lately? They say there are originally two ways to deal with stress: one is to fight it to improve the situation at hand, and the other is to run away from it.

However, in today's society, we often find ourselves in situations where we neither fight nor flee in the face of pressure.

When I was in my third year of working, I was assigned to lead a project. It was my first time as a project leader in the company, and at first I was full of enthusiasm to do my best. In this project, however, all of my subordinates were older than I was. Not long after the project launched, one of my subordinates said to me, "I'd appreciate it if you don't give me orders so casually. You don't have the ability to be a leader yet." That night, I went home and thought, "I don't want to go to work tomorrow!" It was such an overwhelming feeling. I couldn't fight with this older subordinate at that time. Nor could I run away from the project. Similarly, we often find ourselves in situations where there is neither escape nor a way to fight. That's when we get stressed out.

The Scripture that I will share with you today may be an encouragement to you in such a time, as it is about Paul's imprisonment, where he could neither fight nor escape the situation. Yet Paul got through the situation in a different way. I'd like to take a look at how, together.

1. God is at work in scenes that are beyond my control

Let's start from Philippians beginning with verse 12, which we just read today. From the very beginning, Paul tells his readers of his current situation.

Verse 12: Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters,[\[a\]](#) that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

“What happened to me” refers to the fact that Paul was imprisoned due to persecution. Paul himself was in such a situation where he could neither fight nor escape. And the reason why he started to write such an update on his imprisonment first of all is that the Philippian church who received the letter was anxious about Paul's imprisonment. They were worried that they were next in line to be persecuted. There could've even been some who abandoned their faith out of fear. Imprisonment was an incident that would be a setback to the gospel, hardly an incident that would advance it. However, Paul's report was that this incident was not a setback, but rather an advancement of the gospel because through his imprisonment, the gospel reached the Roman guards, the very persecutors, and the brothers and sisters by Paul's side were newly convicted by the Lord and began to speak the word of God boldly.

There are times when we find ourselves in situations where we cannot fight or flee, where we cannot do anything with our own powers. But Paul tells us that even in such situations, God is at work.

There are many scenes in the Old Testament where God works in the face of persecution that is beyond our control. The same was true of the prophet Jeremiah.. When captivity by the Babylonians was imminent, the royal court of Israel decided that they should fight Babylon and be prepared to die gracefully rather than to surrender to the Babylonians. In response, Jeremiah told the people, "He who flees Jerusalem and surrenders to Babylon will live. In fact, many people listened to Jeremiah's words and left Jerusalem. Because of this, Jeremiah was taken prisoner by the government as a traitor. His imprisonment was life threatening. Nevertheless, there are scenes in the Bible where the Lord God speaks repeatedly to Jeremiah in captivity. It was not only a prophecy of judgment, but also a word of salvation to bring Israel back to the land. God was always with Jeremiah throughout his life, encouraging him that God will eventually rescue Jeremiah.

We can see from the Old Testament, as well as from Paul's imprisonment, that God works with us, and that even situations beyond our control are a part of His plan.

If we look at Paul's situation, we see that the difficulty is not only imprisonment, but also the self-centered people in the church who are obstructing his ministry. In verse 17 it says,

"The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains."

Partisanship is also a Greek word that means "self-centeredness" or "self-interest". It was not only the persecution by Rome that obstructed his ministry, but also the very people who were supposed to be his friends.

2 Faith means rejoicing in God's work

But if you look at the second half of verse 18, Paul is rejoicing in the midst of it all. He says, "The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice."

Are you able to rejoice when you have difficulties? How is it that Paul was able to render difficulties into joy?

There is a clue in the Greek word for joy, "chard".

We are usually happy when we're engaging in something enjoyable. Eating good food, falling in love, etc. can be considered joy for us. But in the New Testament, joy is used in the sense of rejoicing in God. We can rejoice when God is with us and when God is working with us. Paul was convinced that God would use everything for His benefit, whether it be Paul's imprisonment due to persecution or the people in the church whose motives were impure.

Paul learned it from Jesus Christ, whom he himself persecuted. In Acts 9:4-6, we read ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

When Paul persecuted Christians, he was also persecuting Jesus Christ. Christ Himself is going about His missionary work while being persecuted by the world. No matter what difficulties we are facing today, we should remember that God is at work there. Isn't that what it means to live by faith?

Paul was able to rejoice because he knew God was with him.

3 Christ still works through prayer

But you may be thinking, "What must I do to rejoice that God is with me?"

If we look at verse 19, Paul is describing the need to pray.

Verse 19: "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."

By "what has happened to me" he means "the preaching of Christ". For Paul, who deemed himself one of God's people who is in accordance with God's plan, it was both his salvation and his joy that those around him are saved. But Paul knew that this would require prayer.

Paul writes, "Pray for me" at every opportunity in his letters. This is because he understood that God works through prayer and we rejoice in God's works.

We might say Grace City Church is going through a trying time right now. A few weeks ago, Pastor Fukuda had a seizure during a sermon and is still taking a break. We're told this is a sign of a recurrence of the stroke he had five years ago. Five years ago, I was a staff member. At one point, when the Pastor had a stroke, causing loss of consciousness and speech impediment, we received an email informing us that he was going to undergo emergency surgery, which caused a great deal of unrest among the staff.

At that time, Grace City Church was honestly not in a very good place. The church was growing, but our growth in faith was not keeping up with it. We didn't seem to love each other as much as we should have.

But when the Pastor's life was in danger, we saw that we needed to repent. The staff gathered in the middle of the night and had a prayer meeting. We prayed, "May God protect the Pastor's body and also protect the church until we grow in the true sense of the word!"

And during the Sunday service that week, everyone present prayed in unison. I wasn't the only one who prayed for the pastor and for the church. Many people were praying in unison at that time.

Then, the next day, on Monday morning, we received a miraculous report. Pastor Fukuda had suddenly recovered and was completely healed, not even needing rehabilitation.

It was a time when we realized that God had heard our prayers and worked in areas that are beyond our control. In that moment, we experienced the true joy of knowing God is at work.

We can get swept up in the situation at hand and become anxious. There are times when we cannot do anything with our own strength. But what the Bible tells us is that God is always there, working through our prayers, no matter what we are going through.

Application: The Spirit of Christ pushing us through the Holy Spirit to be joyful people.

What kind of situation do you find yourself in right now? And what can we do in that situation?

In verse 19, it says that God's plan will work through prayers and the support of the Spirit. Even in those times when we can neither fight nor flee, God has the power to push each one of us into action through our prayers.

In the second century, there was a man named Polycarp who was martyred by Roman persecution. He was hunted under persecution, hiding but being found, running away and hiding again. However, after doing this for a while, he became convinced that it was God's will for him to be arrested and martyred, as he was tracked down every time. He refused to flee any further and waited for the Roman guards to come, and then was captured and martyred.

From a young age, he was taught to fulfill the ministry of a bishop in the church and to live by his faith. His mentor also carried out his witness for Christ through martyrdom. Even though Polycarp was raised in such an environment and was a member of the elite, he initially fled and hid in a hiding place. He constantly prayed in his hiding place, and through his prayers, he was given the will and power to become a martyr. At that time, there were many people who were martyred, but some people thought that martyrdom was something that could not be done without the work of God, not just the work of an individual. But isn't that true not only for martyrdom, but for all of our actions as we try to live out God's will? We should not forget that God is involved in everything we do.

The Holy Spirit is the driving force behind our actions, and living with Him, relying on His power to push us forward, is the way we should aim to live as His people. Paul was not just rejoicing or praying. The Holy Spirit pushed him to write letters and encourage visitors while he was in jail. Even after he left the prison, he was active with the power of God. Even though Jeremiah was a prisoner, he purchased land. This was God's command to prepare Israel for the future when they would return from Babylon. As we pray, we too can receive God's will and walk forward, relying on His power that spurs us forward.

Let's walk this week, relying more on God.

Let us pray!

Almighty God, who has great power and still rules over us.
We praise you for your works.

You, God, are the Redeemer who led the Israelites out of Egypt and delivered them from Babylon.
You are also the Savior who redeemed mankind from the bondage of death and sin.

No matter what trials Grace City Church is going through, and no matter what trials we are personally going through.
You are at work there.
Even that is in your plan.

Please help us to pray to you.
May we ask You for Your great power.
May the support of the Holy Spirit be with all of us here this week.

We pray in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.