

What Do You Want?

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”

Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV)

The apostle Paul was a pastor, teacher, missionary, writer of Scripture and now a prisoner for Jesus Christ. That was a remarkable career for anyone to have in any era.

We marvel that he does not ask his converts to pray for his release from prison so that he can more effectively, and to much greater audiences, preach the Gospel.

What is important to Paul is not so much his own situation but the spiritual progress of those Christians to whom he writes. We can learn a lesson here concerning our own suffering. Ask yourself, “Is my family seeing the grace of God in my life? Are those for whom I have a spiritual responsibility encouraged in their faith by how I submit to the will of God for me?”

No one can tell Paul that he should pray for deliverance from his present life threatening situation. Hear what Paul says about his suffering and learn why he chooses to stay under the horrible conditions and likely death.

Philippians 1:12-14 (NIV)

“Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 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.”

So Paul is clearly not wishing to free himself from the problem he faces. He sees benefits to others that could only come from his personal suffering. In modern Christianity today all we want is to escape the grief that comes upon us in life. We ignore what is happening around us because of our difficult circumstances.

When Dr. James Boyce, minister of the great Tenth Avenue Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia was diagnosed with a terminal cancer some years ago, he calmly accepted his situation. He was a glorious witness to the amazing grace of God for the next couple of months until he went to be with Jesus.

Look again at the situation around you and try to see if anyone is witnessing your calm manner in adversity. Your submission to the Lord will be a better witness than any words you could ever say about God’s grace or the worth of following Christ.

In speaking of the “storms of life” John Newton penned the following words.

Be gone unbelief my Saviour
is near and for my relief will
shortly appear
By faith let me wrestle and He
will perform, with Christ in
the vessel I smile at the storm.

Soon enough your problems
will be gone. Your Saviour
shall bring the needed relief in
His time. What do you want?
Is the glory of God more im-
portant to you than relief from
your temporary problem?
How will you view today from
the vantage point of heaven?
Live for Jesus today and ac-
cept His needed help for the
journey until the eternal day
dawns and all sorrows fade
into the distant past.

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