

Joining Jesus' Story
Week 3: To live or die is Christ

Hit the Joining Jesus" Story Challenge...

What Paul is teaching us from prison is that we can join Jesus' story through hardship and suffering. I know it sounds weird, but when we suffer we are experiencing something that Jesus experienced. It is the foundation of his story. But the key to Jesus' story is **why he suffered** and **the attitude he had in the midst of it.** Jesus did it for the ones he loves, that's us; but he also did it with a different kind of attitude. **He didn't quit when it got hard, become bitter, curse God, blame others, and only focus on when it is over.** He had an unusual attitude.

Attitude = a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior.

It's settled in that it's the **normal default way of looking at life.**

What's your default attitude if you were to put it into a word? There are two simple categories that might work and they are **positive or negative.** You could go with **bold or anxious.** Or even **encouraging or critical.**

Jesus was human as well as God, so he felt pain. Jesus had ways of looking at something, but he always came back to his default. And that's the stuff we just read.

And here's the kicker. You don't just have a Jesus like attitude just because you have come to church for a while or even a long time. You don't just get it because you know a lot about the Bible and, therefore, a lot about God.

How would you describe Jesus' attitude based upon that definition? Write one or two words in your journal.

That brings us to the verse right before our theme verse for this series. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Philippians 2:5

Wow! That sounds intimidating. But Paul isn't saying that we need to do this on our own. **He is going to describe how Jesus transformed his attitude.**

As Jesus transforms us, it is his life being lived through us as we join his story.

Let's read this together. If you are following along in your journal or even on a device, **mark anything that speaks of Jesus' attitude.** Because that is the story we are joining. **We need to learn, practice, and be transformed into a person with these attitudes.** And I will warn you. They are very different from what we see in **those who seek control, power, comfort, etc.**

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,^[b] ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^[c] being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:6-11 ESV

As I read this, mark where you see Jesus' attitude in Paul. This is Paul joining Jesus' Story.

Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the

faith,²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. Philippians 1:18b-26

I see Jesus' attitude all over Paul's words. It just sounds like what Jesus would say in Paul's situation.

- **Jesus was put in a life or death situation.**
- **Jesus chose what would bless and save others, not himself.**
- **Jesus was willing to go through pain and suffering, not for himself, but for others.**

So here's the question. How can messed up, selfish, flawed, sinful people like us get this kind of attitude that says whether I live or die; it's all good, but I'll live because it's better for others.

How can I have the same attitude as Jesus? How can I be willing to sacrifice for others, be positive and faithful, even in the midst of suffering and wrong being done to me? How can I be more about the people's need for God and the truth of Jesus and less about my own comfort and agenda?

Paul is telling us not only about his attitude, but what he needs in order to have the same attitude of Jesus. What does he need in order to have Jesus' attitude? Prayers from others who want it too.

It's one of the first things he says. Yes, and I will rejoice,¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. V. 18b-20

He goes so far as to say that the prayers of his Philippian friends are necessary for his deliverance. He can't remain faithful, which is Jesus' attitude if they don't pray for him.

This is written to people who not only love Paul, but also are committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ just like Paul is. They are in it with him. These aren't simply donors to the mission, they are participating in the

mission. They aren't just his prayer partners who mark a box on a support letter promising to pray for him. No, they want what Paul wants.

This prayer that Paul is asking them to pray on his behalf is about him being sustained and remaining faithful until the end. That is an attitude or subtle way of thinking and feeling about his situation in Jail awaiting trial because of his preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is what he prays for them earlier in the letter. Now he asks them to do the same for him.

¹⁰ For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. Philippians 1:10 NLT
What I prayed for you, I need you to pray for me.

In another letter to some Christ followers in Thessalonica, Paul prayed this way. So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do. ¹² Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be honored because of the way you live, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 NLT

I am asking God to give you what you need to have, the attitude that Jesus had. He was able to live a life that was worthy of his calling as our savior. He didn't do anything that detracted from that calling to teach us about the Kingdom and provide us with the forgiveness that allows us to stand before the king. Paul is praying for these believers, that they will live lives worthy of their calling as disciples of Jesus who have joined his mission in this world. He wants them to have the kind of attitude that will produce godly actions that will bring honor to God and his Lord Jesus.

All of that is what Paul is asking his friends to pray on his behalf. Don't let me give in, take a short cut, or compromise in any way that will keep me from fulfilling my calling and would dishonor the One that I love.

If I am to grow into this attitude that Paul had and that Jesus had, I need people praying for me. God takes that prayer and, through his holy

spirit, uses it to transform my attitude. **Make me the kind of man that I was created to be, but can't pull off on my own.**

Here's another thing. **When we are in relationship with others in the body of Christ**, that is when we can become aware of our attitude not being like Jesus. **When we reflect with others** about how we think and feel about life, we might just notice that our attitude is like our culture, not Jesus. If it's just you and your news feed on your phone and your toxic social media, you won't even notice that your attitude has slipped.

Paul needed other people and so do you and I.

That brings us to the **second thing that Paul needs** in order to have a Jesus' like attitude that will **allow him to fulfill his calling and bring honor to God in his crazy situation in prison**. Like Paul, you and I need...**Jesus's Spirit present in my situation.**

Yes, and I will rejoice,¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. V. 18b-20

That word **help** is kind of a vanilla way to describe something a little deeper. It's not so much, "I need help, I'm drowning." **It supplies me with what I need to continue to float and not sink.** That word **help**, more literally, means **supply me with the Spirit of Jesus Christ**. That is another way of saying the Holy Spirit or the presence of the risen Christ. He is present here, not in a body like he was, but through his spirit.

I'm not asking for a good lawyer, a bail bondsman, an advocate in the government, or group of rabid supporters who will put pressure on the authorities so that I can get out and get back to preaching Jesus and planting a church. **No, give me what I really need in this situation, and in any situation, and that is more Jesus.**

He wants to live up to his calling to preach Jesus and start churches and, ultimately, to bring honor to Jesus, whether in life or death. For

that, he needs Jesus to be present in his situation. If Jesus is here with me, I'll get the representation I need, the courage I need, the words I need, the food I need...

Paul is not asking for a special gift of the Holy Spirit in order to do some great apostolic thing. He is asking for what any believer can ask for. This isn't high-level Apostle stuff, this is what is available to everyone who will be obedient to Jesus. This is God's presence. If you have stepped over the line of faith and have trusted your life and future to Jesus, then you have access to the presence of the living Christ in your situation right now. And frankly, that's the only thing you and I really need. That is if our desire, to fulfill our calling as disciples who follow Jesus, are being changed by Jesus, and committed to Jesus' mission and, ultimately, to honor him by the way we live.

Even the first thing Paul needs, the prayers of others, is only made powerful through the holy spirit, and the holy spirit is simply more Jesus.

Like the wind, it cannot be controlled; you just have to go with it and know which way it is blowing. The Holy Spirit doesn't keep a schedule, and tends to have questionable timing. You can't control the Holy Spirit, you just have to go with it. And that's a problem for us in America. We think we should be able to control everything we do. Sorry, that's not reality.

"Supply me with what I really need, to live and have the right attitude, and that is your presence. I don't want to grieve or resist your presence by having an attitude that is not like Jesus. Transform me."

Let's look at this phrase again...but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

That brings us to that life versus death debate that Paul has. Like Paul, you and I cannot see the attitude of Jesus grow in our lives if we view life and death like our culture does. To have his attitude...I need to view life and death like Jesus did.

This is Paul's **debate over which is preferable**. Through this inner debate, we see how he views life and death and how it's like the story of Jesus.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Both are about Jesus. I live for him or I get to be with him. Either way, Jesus is everything. ²² **If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.** ²³ **I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.** ²⁴ **But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.** ²⁵ **Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith,** ²⁶ **so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.** V. 21-26

In Paul's dilemma between life and death, **he knows that it is not up to him**, but he is stating that **he will choose life because it is best for the Philippians and, therefore, most likely what God will choose.**

Let's look at how Paul viewed death. It was about being with Jesus.

Death, if not viewed as being with Christ, will be something that we don't talk about. It will be **the elephant in the room**. It is the **one thing you can't control**. If you don't think about it, then the things of this world will naturally rise in importance. It doesn't have to be a conscious decision. If you don't view it this way, there will be a **stronger pull to act like it isn't going to happen**. This will make our **material possessions and our standing in life way too important** to us.

I get to be in the presence of the most beautiful being ever, Jesus. **The one who was is all of what I wanted to become and he is there and I have access to him.** I won't say, "That's kind of like how Jesus is." I'll be with him.

Death is a defeated enemy. It is a **toothless, clawless, predator**. It makes lots of noise and sometimes hides quietly in the weeds, but for Paul, it is not to be something he is scared of. And by the way, he's closer to it than most people. **It's Darth Vader without the force, a death star, or even a lightsaber.**

If I can view death like Paul and have the attitude of Jesus, then that attitude will make me more effective here on earth. Paul had hope and it didn't depend on whether he got out of this situation or not. It wasn't dependent upon that. A person with that kind of attitude, is hard to stop. Because finding him guilty and even sentencing him to death doesn't stop him. He just goes to be in the presence of Jesus, not as he is with the Holy Spirit in this world, but face-to-face.

If we don't view death this way, and avoid talking about it, then pretty soon our circumstance will start to determine our attitude.

Is your attitude really negative right now and really fearful right now because of what is going on in our country, both politically and socially? Can I suggest that you have missed the point of life versus death?

But his view of life keeps us from being so heaven focused that we are not good to anyone here. This world is a sinking ship, that we just need our Jesus lifeboat in order to get off of it before it goes down.

Look at how he describes the option of not being executed in prison.

...that means fruitful labor for me.

...is more necessary on your account.

...for your progress and joy in the faith,

...in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus.

He views life as a way to be a part of what God is doing in this world. He is about making the Kingdom of God present for others. People get to see that the authority of God over all things is being renewed through Jesus and they can join that.

That perspective on life is bullet proof. It will stand up and create a Jesus attitude, regardless of the circumstances. It's not like this..."Oh God where are you in this messed up world? I'm right here waiting to live my life through yours if you will only join me."

If our circumstances are always able to turn our attitude negative or self-absorbed, then we won't have a "settled way of thinking and feeling about life that is consistent in the story of Jesus.

Steven Covey in his book, *Habits of Highly Successful People*, "Begin with the end in mind." In other words, what would be on your gravestone?

What did we have on Quinten's marker at Warner Camp?

Paul is taking what he said in verse 12 to its extreme conclusion. **I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, Philippians 1:12 ESV**

What does the future hold in this story?

Ending well for Paul is...

- **"deliverance"** not necessarily from the struggle or suffering, but from an attitude about life and death that is poison and can be spread like a virus.
- **Not ashamed. but full of courage.**
- **Christ gets the honor.**

And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. Colossians 3:4 NLT

If you are in our email you will get this coming to you. It is on the back of your outline so you can take it home and I encourage you to do that.

Steps to joining Jesus' Story:

1. **Meditate on, memorize, and personalize Jesus' story.**

Yes, that is the same as last week, but how we will do it is different. **Like last week, I want you to take a verse or a section of this poem that tells the story we are invited to join, but it also describes the attitude we are to have.**

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

- This is an attitude of _____

- "Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus, grow this attitude in me and show me how I can practice this attitude today."

⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^[c] being born in the likeness of men.

- This is an attitude of _____
- "Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus, grow this attitude in me and show me how I can practice this attitude today."

⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- This is an attitude of _____
- "Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus, grow this attitude in me and show me how I can practice this attitude today."

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

- This is an attitude of _____
- "Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus, grow this attitude in me and show me how I can practice this attitude today."

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

- This is an attitude of _____
- "Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus, grow this attitude in me and show me how I can practice this attitude today."

¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:6-11 (ESV)

- This is an attitude of _____
- "Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus, grow this attitude in me and show me how I can practice this attitude today."

2. Ask someone to pray that The Holy Spirit will transform your attitude