

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

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MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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A Call for Celebration

The fact that good people are persecuted is one thing that has been consistent throughout history. In the Beatitudes, Jesus promises that there is a great reward in store for the faithful. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Matthew 5:10-12). Jesus made it clear that our treasures are not found here on earth but in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and thieves are unable to steal. We do not have exact details of what heaven is like but Jesus refers to it as paradise.

The Apostle Paul knew that heaven was his destiny. He made many enemies throughout his missions and was punished by non-believers for refusing to abandon the gospel. He was tortured, held in prison, threatened with death, and abandoned by those that he thought were fellow believers. However, no matter how much he suffered, he always sustained the belief that the Lord will deliver him from evil and preserve him for the heavenly kingdom.

While the Apostle Paul was in prison, he maintained a positive attitude that was congruent with the teachings of Jesus. He sent word to the church in Philippi to pray for him and to send some provisional care. They sent a man named Epaphroditus and Paul sent him back with the letter that we know as Philippians in the Bible. Paul thanks the church for their help but has a more pressing concern. He advises the Philippians that they need to distinguish things that truly matter from those that do not. According to Paul, his imprisonment is insignificant because what really matters is the advance of the gospel. So, he writes a letter of thanksgiving because his joy is in the heavenly realm and the growth of the gospel. He is happy because the authorities that have locked him up have not suppressed the spreading of the gospel. So, the Apostle Paul encourages the church to celebrate along with him.

The Apostle Paul lays down solid theological doctrine. When you confess your faith, you essentially make a pledge of allegiance to the teachings of Jesus. It takes inner soul searching and sincere reflection to be able to be the person that God directs us to be. As children of God, all Christians are to live by the teachings of Jesus. In the Old Testament, the perception of righteousness is based on law. The Apostle Paul's doctrine is that righteousness is based on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we not only live a life of righteousness, but we also rejoice with thanksgiving because our reward is great in heaven.

While the Apostle Paul was in prison, he said that even if he is the sacrificial offering for them for their faith, then he is glad and rejoices with them. However, the lesson is more than one of thanksgiving and the lesson is more than one of thanksgiving even in the face of suffering. The real lesson is why the Apostle Paul is thankful in the face of suffering. Paul knows Jesus willingly offered himself to suffer and die for us. The Apostle Paul knows that suffering and death lead us to the glory of God. He is thankful because the love of God is so great that Jesus is with us in our suffering. Like the Apostle Paul, whenever we get one of the many setbacks of life, we can celebrate with thanksgiving for our reward is great in heaven.

Thank you,

George