

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

In Your Presence, Joyful Joyful, Whom Shall I Fear, Victor's Crown, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

WELCOME

Share a phobia that you may have. Are you afraid of heights? Snakes? Spiders? Crowded spaces? Do you have Thanatophobia, the fear of death? How has your phobia affected the way you live your life?

WORD

PHILIPPIANS 1:21-30

²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²²But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. ²³But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; ²⁴yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again. ²⁷Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. ²⁹For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

We experience fear many times as we go through life. Indeed, the first quarter of 2020 has been very eventful, with multiple natural disasters and a new virus with an unknown cure just yet that has perhaps struck fear in our hearts.

But as Christians, why do we need to talk about FEAR? Well, many people don't realize Satan is a thief. He wants to steal your JOY and PEACE. He uses fear because being fearful really robs us of our joy! For you to be afraid is not exactly bad, it can be a good thing if it warns you that something threatens your well-being. What makes it bad is when you allow fear to paralyze you. You see, we tend to worry about things that will never happen – we imagine all the bad things that can happen, we worry about it more and more, and we end up hiding in fear even if nothing bad has happened just yet! But fear can do us good if we learn to use it as a trigger to point us to Jesus. It is okay to be afraid, as long as we know how to deal with it—let it draw us closer to the Lord!

God wants us to be joyful (**Philippians 4:4**) and we are actually commanded to serve with gladness and joy (**Psalms 100:2**). Joy is also our privilege and heritage through the Holy Spirit (**Romans 14:17**). As a follower of Christ, the central core of your life must be JOY. At the peripheral can be sadness, grief, and other negative emotions... but the center of your life is still joy. Are you still joyful? Is your family predictably joyful? **Bruce Larson said, "There are no sad saints... if God is really is the center of one's life and being, joy is inevitable."**

WHAT IS THE ANTIDOTE TO FEAR? We must LIVE A CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE. How do we beat our fears—especially our fear of death, by Christ-centered living? We learn

from the Apostle Paul three things that explains his perspective on life and death as recorded in **Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."**

1. PERSPECTIVE

Philippians 1:21-26 is Paul's expression of his perspective on his life-threatening situation. He was imprisoned under the rule of Nero, a ruthless emperor who was bent on destroying Christians. Paul had his hopes of being set free (**v.22**), and yet he can also say that if he ends up suffering and dying (**in his term, 'depart', a word used for soldiers unpacking tents and going home, or sailors setting sail and lifting the anchor up; to depart is to relocate rather than a resignation or disappearance**), he will be at a much better state in the presence of Jesus Christ. His great goal in life is for Christ to be given glory, whether he lives or dies!

This should instruct us that in the Christian life, you need two wings to rise above your fears, one wing is FAITH, and the other is HOPE. Satan wants to rob you of your ability to soar in joy, so you need to hold on to both "wings". For Paul, whether he lives or dies, his desire is that Christ will be exalted. He was so Christ-centered there was no room for disappointments! This is like David's honest prayer in **Psalms 56**. He acknowledges his fear (**v.3**), but it becomes a trigger for him to put his faith and trust in God as he anchored himself on the promises (word) of GOD (**v.4**).

There is no antidote to fear if you don't know GOD and you don't trust Him. You need courage that is fueled by your faith in Christ, trusting that God Himself will achieve His purpose

WORD (cont'd)

through your struggles or pain. **1 Corinthians 15:51-54 and 58** tells us that there is an amazing promise related to the believer's death – to be set free from our perishable bodies and raised into our imperishable bodies; a life focused on Jesus has an **eternal** perspective on things, and you desire for God's glory to be revealed in every situation you face in life.

2. PRIORITY

It was very clear that Paul's priorities were well-defined, and he lived so accordingly in every waking moment of his life. Look at **Philippians 1:21-26** – notice how Jesus Christ is identified as Paul's repeatedly-emphasized PURPOSE! It is important to have the right perspective, but even more important to let it impact the way you live. How you live reflects your beliefs. If you say you are a believer and follow Christ, it must show through your priorities. **Philippians 1:27** shows how Paul gave emphasis to "**striving together**", a powerful picture of doing our best to make the gospel known to other people. A life of purpose is something that shouldn't be a foreign concept to Christians: our lives' very purpose is to be salt and light to others (**Matthew 5:13-16**)!

3. PERSEVERANCE

In **Philippians 1:29-30**, Paul speaks of how suffering is **a privilege, granted upon** the Philippians for the **SAKE OF CHRIST**. As a follower of Jesus, you do not just look forward to heaven, but labor well, persevere in both good times and times of sufferings here on earth, for God's greater glory and for Jesus Christ's greater renown. Peter writes in **1 Peter 4:12-13** that suffering is to test us – it is an opportunity for us to stay focused on Jesus with joy!

The Biblical perspective is crucial: when facing the fear of death, a Christ-centered person perseveres as he looks forward to enjoying eternal joy (**Ps. 16:11**), in God's presence (**Phil. 1:21**), where there would no more pain, death, or suffering, and we reign forever with Jesus (**Rev. 21:4,7**). Do you remember the criminal on the cross (**Luke 23:39-43**)? He admitted his guilt and recognized that Jesus has done no wrong. He turned to Jesus in humility when he said to Him, "*Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom...*". What did Jesus say to him in response? He promised the repentant sinner that he will be with Jesus in paradise on that very day!

We must live a Christ-centered life so that we do not fear death, nor worry about things that frighten us. Christ is with us; we persevere with joy and have hope for a better future in and with Him!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

- 1. Self-Check.** What are you most afraid of in the world that we live in now? What insights from our lesson today helps you deal with that fear?
- 2. Setting It Right.** Maybe you have fears that can be traced back to a lack of faith in God and His promises. Take time to confess these and pray for one another that God will renew your heart so that you will turn your fears into praises!
- 3. Living It Out.** What steps will you take to strengthen your trust in Christ so that you may consistently live a Christ-centered life? Do you need to be more faithful in reading the Bible, coming to Dgroup meetings, prayer, sharing Christ instead of focusing on your fears?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Do you know of anyone who needs the comfort of eternal security through Christ alone? Pray for them and share the gospel to them; teach them where to find courage, hope, and strength to face their fears – IN CHRIST ALONE!

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants and a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends