

# JOY: Gospel Hope: The Pattern of Christian Thinking

## Philippians 1:18c-26

**MPS** Christ-followers prioritize the glory of Jesus Christ in the pattern of our thinking to focus on faithfulness to Him in our living.

**OBJ** Every Person can understand the pattern of Christian thinking by Two aspects and Three Influences.

**INTRO** Importance of Thinking Journals are in great abundance today. You can get them in any size and paper type. I use about 6 journals a year because they help me think, clarifying what I am thinking about, helping me to prioritize my thinking, and how I am thinking. But recently I received one and felt a “wait a minute” moment. I saw the “Thinkers Smart notebook” and all its advertising and thought, this looks like a good option, so I ordered one. How could this NOT improve my thinking? When it arrived, “Voila!” I opened it to find...empty pages! And there I was, resigned to nothing more than my own thoughts.

### READ Philippians 1:18c-26

Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup>for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup>If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup>I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup>But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup>Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup>so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. **Philippians 1:18c-26**

**Paul anchors his joy in serving the gospel and in the confidence of his salvation.** Through the prayers of the Philippians on his behalf and the Holy Spirit, he is confident that he will be delivered. There are two items that are so closely associated in Paul’s words here that they must be directly connected. He states, “*through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*”. He is saying that when the Philippians pray, Holy Spirit comes to his aid. The prayers of God’s people infuse the power of Holy Spirit to the person in need! LifePoint, when we pray, God works to do what only He can do, save His people! Exactly what Paul is referring to is a bit unclear. It is hard to know for sure whether he means his conversion experience or his deliverance from his present situation. But what is clear is that he does not see them as two separate things. Paul rejoices NOT because everything is working perfectly but in the knowledge that everything will be perfectly worked out, no matter how it ends! He takes JOY in what he knows to be true about God and about how the Spirit of Jesus Christ will help in delivering him. **For Paul, to know what Christ has done in salvation means to hold to Him and trust what He is doing in his present situation because his hope is sufficient for both.**

**Paul didn’t see his salvation as something separate from daily life.** Whatever may occur, whether in life or death, Paul concludes, Christ will be honored in his body. This is because our salvation in Jesus gets worked out through every life situation as God works in us. Though we often do not know or understand the means of God’s work, which Paul obviously did not know, the end is never in question. The way we walk through the “means”, the process or journey of the hard times, is to keep our eyes on the end! This provides an explanation of that sure conviction expressed in 1:6, “*that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*” **Our eternal hope in Jesus is our sure conviction of His firm grip to hold us in Him through every situation and circumstance.**

**TRANS** The hope Paul holds in Christ provides a pattern of thinking to honor Christ at all times. And so, he states one of the most clear and concise mission statements ever penned for the Christian life.

<sup>21</sup>For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup>If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup>I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

<sup>24</sup>But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup>Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup>so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. **Philippians 1:21-26**



**Paul's situation caused him to reflect on his whole life.** He's not writing a personal mantra for his social media bio. He is reflecting and prospecting on his whole life. This is how he has lived his whole life, no opportunity lost, no situation squandered, no moment wasted. He is wrestling with his deepest desires in the midst of his hardest circumstances, and amidst and against any temptation to 'feel' otherwise, he directs his thinking to align with what he knows to be true and sets his life to faithful service in trusting how God will work all things out for Him.

**Hard times have a way of placing life under magnification.** We analyze everything we have done, what got us to where we are, what we could have done differently, and what may or may not be yet to come. Our vision becomes tunneled on different aspects of our life. In these moments we can be volatile because our thinking may lead to bad decisions based on faulty conclusions from wrong interpretations. [The greatest safeguard against taking wrong turns out of hard times is to have your life tethered to that which will help steer you along the path of remaining faithful to follow Jesus.](#)

**TRANS** And this is the critical importance for every Christ-follower! What you believe about and how you think about your life in Christ will determine what you do when times become uncertain. Train your mind to strengthen your hope and joy so you will have it when you most need it.

[Christ-followers prioritize the glory of Jesus Christ in the pattern of our thinking to focus on faithfulness to Him in our living.](#)

The failure of Christian thinking often occurs in our focus on 'outcome' versus 'obedience'. We demand God gives us a guarantee about our situation. God gives an eternal promise and a command for our situation. We demand to know the end from the beginning. God says you already know the end; "I Am that I Am." We demand, "God, tell me everything is going to be okay." God says, "It's going to be better than okay. I have told you that I am working all things for your good. I guarantee that everything will be eternally glorious." What we believe about God should not just influence, sway or brighten, but determine what we believe about our life. And what we believe about our life must pattern our thinking to determine how we live. [We need nothing more than all God has given us by promise and command in His Word, we need only trust and obey.](#)

**HOW does a person center their life on Jesus?** Hope In Christ shapes the pattern of our thinking to serve Jesus with our whole life in every circumstance.

**OBJ** [Two aspects and Three Influences that shapes and steers the Christian pattern of thinking](#)

The first aspect is that a Christian pattern of thinking begins with...

**One PRIORITY: the glory of Jesus Christ**

**Paul's culminates with his one priority, the glory of Jesus Christ.**<sup>26</sup> Though his final, culminating statement here, it serves as the guiding priority for all he says. There is no competing priority for Paul, neither his safety and security, nor some other good for the Philippians. [The glory of Jesus Christ sets the direction for all things in Paul's thinking.](#)

Until you settle this matter, your thinking will always be convoluted, especially in hard times, because your worship is not wholehearted. Competing priorities weigh into every decision to distort your thinking. When Joshua says, "*choose this day whom you will serve,... But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*"<sup>Joshua24:15</sup>, he is calling you to set the Lord as your priority in all things. If you wait, you will elevate other things to interfere in your thinking. And as long as you have a competing priority you will never have a clear pattern of thinking nor a confident hope in focus. [Loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind,](#)<sup>Matt22:37</sup> [means setting His glory as your priority.](#) **Have you set the glory and honor of Jesus Christ as THE priority of your life?**

The second aspect is that a Christian pattern of thinking culminates with...

**One FOCUS: A whole life of faithful fruitfulness for Jesus.** "*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*"

**What does it mean "to live is Christ"?** Paul says it means "*fruitful labor*". The life in Christ is focused on faithfulness to Jesus' commands and fruitfulness in serving His Kingdom. This is not with lip service, but life service. How we live our whole life



matters because this statement is not true if we say anything other than Christ is our life. There is no gain in death if Christ is not our life.

**APPL** Have you ever thought about one statement that culminates your whole life? Complete this for your life: For to me to live is \_\_\_\_\_, and to die is \_\_\_\_\_. What fills the first blank always determines what completes the second. You need not create your own. Take the counsel of God's Word because there is nothing you can live for other than Jesus Christ and say that death will be your gain. *Only a life lived by faith in Jesus Christ for His glory can view death as gain. But every one that does live by faith in Jesus has the promised hope that it shall be!*

How are you living today so that if it is your last you can honestly say, "death would be gain"? Christian thinking stays focused on this, that what we know to be true of God determines the way we live our life. *The life lived for Christ is one of fruitful labor in serving the gospel to make disciples of all people.*

**TRANS** God has given us help to steer our thinking.

**Three Influences** that steer a Christian pattern of thinking.

1. **Encouragement by the ministry of God's people in the church.** (.19)

Paul begins this section by identifying the prayers of God's people as a primary influence and help for him. He is not only helped by them, but also encouraged by their "*progress and joy in the faith*,"<sup>25</sup> The prayers and ministry among God's people steer Paul's thinking to know that for him to remain in the flesh for gospel ministry is his call from God.

How is the ministry of God's people in the church influencing your thinking? You only receive the ministry of God's people by participation in the fellowship. *Encouragement from God's people in the gospel is vital to keep the heart strong and the mind clear and sharp. Is your heart and mind receiving the ministry of God's people from gospel community, to be steered toward faithful fruitfulness?*

**TRANS** You can't be encouraged by ppl you are not around.

**APPL** Lifeway Research published an article titled "What the Church Must Do to Keep Kids—and Parents—Spiritually Engaged".<sup>1</sup> The article included a graph of the Best Predictors for Spiritual health in children. The top five predictors are regular reading of the Bible, prayer, serving in church, listening to Christian music, and church mission trips / projects.

2. **Confidence in the Spirit's work for salvation.** (.19-20)

When God's people pray for him, Paul says Holy Spirit helps him for his salvation. And all this help serves to strengthen his hope and confidence in what God is doing in his life, whether in delivering him from his hard situation or in eternal salvation through death. Paul confidence in God that continues to grow, stated in 1:6, applies to all of life. There is nothing in the Christian's life that Phil 1:6 does not apply to and toward. In every situation the Christian can confidently declare, "God is perfecting / transforming me in this." In every situation the Christian can confidently declare, "God will complete His perfecting of me through this." There will be NO half-baked Christians when God gets finished! Paul is confident in God for this, that God did FOR me at the point of my justification is now working IN me in my sanctification and will carry me all the way through TO my glorification in Jesus! *Holy Spirit is the confirmation and seal of our eternal hope, our illuminator and guide in God's Word, and our strength to walk by faith in obedience to Jesus Christ. Are you taking in the Word of God and listening to the Spirit of God for daily strength?*

3. **Life Commitments that serve and honor Jesus Christ** (.24)

The commitments Paul made in life were the things that held him steady and led his thinking to serve the Lord in hard times; "*Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all*,".<sup>25</sup> *Commitments that are not aligned with your priority in life always create a competition of life resource, and lead to false worship.*

<sup>1</sup> <https://lifewayresearch.com/2021/03/03/what-the-church-must-do-to-keep-kids-and-parents-spiritually-engaged/> Last Accessed September 26, 2021.



What commitments have you filled your life with? Are they aligned with priorities that are worth selling out for? Do they add a steadying factor in life that leads you toward God, or constantly pull you away? Do your life commitments tether you to what you know to be true of God and His people? Or, are the commitments of your life competing with the work of God and the gospel in your life? Are the commitments of your life, that consume your time, energy, money, and thoughts, fully aligned with your one priority and focus? Life commitments steer our thinking as they align the resource of life with the priority of God's glory and the focus on serving His Kingdom. Any other commitment only, but always, leads away from God.

Christ-followers prioritize the glory of Jesus Christ in the pattern of our thinking to focus on faithfulness to Him in our living.

**APPL** IF your life ended today, would the cumulative testimony of what you lived point others to Christ? If not, what needs to change today in order to make that true?

