

# TO LIVE IS CHRIST - PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

<sup>18b-21</sup> Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, 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. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

- Think your prayers aren't important? They brought joy to Paul. He believed that because of them and by help of the Spirit (I take this to be the Holy Spirit) he would be delivered. Is this physical or spiritual deliverance/salvation? Not sure. Maybe both concepts, but one thing is for sure: he's been in prison before and will be again. He's confident about making it out, but he's not sure. That's life for you.
- Paul was not ashamed for serving Christ even if that meant physical persecution. Paul would stand before men of great power, but he was not ashamed. Why should we be embarrassed of Christ? I'd mentioned last week about a difference between fear and shame. Being ashamed of Christ should not be an option.
  - It's been said that the way to overcome an emotion is to replace it with another. Paul could replace possible fear and uncertainty with joy and that gave him confidence. But what gave him joy? Honoring Christ.
  - It's easier said than done, but we can honor Christ in the lives we live for Him or the ones we give for Him. It's not one or the other. Sometimes Christians were called, not only to live for Christ, but to die for Him. We really don't understand this in the West. Persecution is foreign to us, but many foreigners know it well. The church's history is filled with persecution. Jesus said that you are blessed if you suffer on His account.
- How could have Christ been honored in the garden by Peter? By putting down his sword and following Christ. But, it would seem that Peter could better honor Him by fighting - that's glorious. I've been going through "Church History" and this passage made me think of what has been done to "honor" Christ. Listen, the Catholic Church struggled with this humility. Let's not forget the Crusades, in particular, between 1100-1300 A.D. to rid Muslims from Jerusalem and surrounding areas. Of course - maybe they could convert some Muslims . . . or benefit from taking their wealth. And of course - you were promised forgiveness of sins if you were to give your life for the cause. "God wills it" they cried out! One cringes to think all that has been done in the name of Christ. What all has been done to "honor" God's will. Christ doesn't need us to be physically strong to honor Him. He doesn't need us to be wealthy or popular. He doesn't need any of that. Paul realized that in this, what would be considered an embarrassing state, Christ could and WAS being honored in this position of submission by Paul. Look at what a follower will go through for Christ . . . so how great is Christ. The world will look at our suffering as proof that God doesn't exist . . . or at least that He's a cruel God. Christians see it differently. No one would go through what we do for someone else unless they were worth it. So, if Christians suffer so for Christ . . . how good is Jesus?

- It's an important lesson: we don't always know what's going to happen and that's okay. We can hope and even be confident, but many times if we're being honest - we don't know. However, we do need to pay attention. In this passage he hopes to make it out . . . and he did. But, by the time he wrote 2 Timothy . . . it was clear to him that his time of departure had come.
- "To live is Christ" is to serve Christ. "To die" is what may happen to Paul and eventually did according to tradition. He was beheaded at the hands of Nero. When we read Paul's statement in 2 Timothy we see his confidence in the Lord and how, though he die, would come into His kingdom.
  - To live is Christ. What a beautiful way to say it. Not "to live means to serve Christ in every way with the time given me." To live is Christ. I think it's something we can struggle with. It was his life. You don't have to be a preacher to think about godly things frequently. You don't have to be a preacher to study God's word. Many times, those who don't preach put preachers to shame in their study habits, prayer, trust and service. However, many times we isolate Christ in our lives. "Christianity" is a thing you do - almost something to put on your resume under "Hobbies." This is why we want to know what's going on with the group. What can we do. What role can we play. What's expected? It shouldn't be that a handful of people have come to know this. Some people have rewarded themselves by knowing Christ. They can say, "To live is Christ" and mean it. **It's incredible powerful to hear someone say "Christ is everything" when many people think you've lost everything.**

22-26 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

- Paul would think just like you. He wasn't a superhuman. He knew it was better to be with Christ, but it wasn't because he "complaining" like we tend to do in our current situations.
- We're seeing the mind of Christ in Paul. Jesus came to mankind, stayed with Him, and then gave His all for them. So, Paul understood the value of staying and helping.
- Not only did Paul pray for their progress, which is powerful, but he also did what he could to help them grow and have joy in the faith.
- Do we look for opportunities to serve others (not just Christians) for their benefit? Not for the purpose of receiving anything (we've already received the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Savior). I know many of you do.

27-30 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that

from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

- One of the great signs of love and genuineness towards anything is what's done in secret or privately. Think about all the hours of practice an athlete or musician put into their craft when no one is looking or listening. Think of the unspoken acts of service one may do for another, though they may never know of it. And so, we are to be Christ-like whether we're around each other or not. We're not to "play church" as one sister in Christ used to call it.
- However, in this context, he's encouraging the church to live Christlike in his absents. They are to stand firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side. But what are they doing? Well, then help one another live the gospel and spread the gospel. We're here to help one another when we struggle with fear. We're here for one another to grow in Jesus. We're here for one another - it's not meant to be a "go it alone" idea. It became popular at some point to say, "I love God, but not religion." What does that really mean in application? Listen, God gave the world His Son, who gave the church the Spirit who dwells in us all. We play a major role in each other's lives and live's in the world. At least we're supposed to!
- When we do so, they see the power of God and begin to connect the dots. They see where we stand and what we stand for. They either stand with us or they do not.
- But see, this isn't always easy. Suffering and conflict has been granted to us for the sake of Christ. It carries the idea "to give freely as a favor, give graciously." Yes, God favors us by graciously gifting us with suffering. Remember what Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 10? It wouldn't be peachy, would it? Do you think it's worth it all?