

Sermon Series on "Philippians: A Call to Joy"

Sermon No. 5: To Live is Christ, To Die is Gain

Philippians 1:18-26

In Christian circles and particularly funerals, we often hear the words "*to live is Christ, and to die is gain*". Are these the words of an idealist out of touch with reality? When you've undergone so much suffering or carry around an ailing body, is death a longed-for escape, or just another phase in your eternal existence that merely completes the joy you already have?

We will find the answers to these in a man who had already suffered much, and now faced the prospect of unjustified execution. While he expressed his personal longing, he subsumes that to the higher goal of whatever will exalt Christ. Here we discover the perfect blending of someone who loved Christ with all his heart, and yet loved others so much he was willing to accept whatever fate God gave him, because either way, God was going to be glorified:

1. **TO LIVE IS CHRIST: The Blessings You Experience In Living For Christ:** vv. 18-21a

- a. The Joy of Answered Prayer
- b. The Help given by the Spirit of Christ
- c. Present Vindication
- d. Final Deliverance
- e. The Glorification of Christ

2. **TO DIE IS GAIN: The Ultimate Blessing Of Finally Being With Christ:** vv. 21b-23

- This is not escapism, but the joy of finally being with the Christ you have loved all your life.
- Death is gain only for those who can truly say "*To live is Christ*".

3. **The Blessings Other Experience As You Live For Christ:** vv. 24-26

The "*Fruitful Labor*" of v. 22 is explained:

- a. The Progress of others in "*the Faith*".
- b. The Joy of others in "*the Faith*".

Be a person of one passion: Christ and Him alone. This is what God desired for the Philippians and for us as well. Both our "*progress*" and that of the gospel is contingent upon this characterizing our individual and corporate lives.

In a world that has lost its way, believers in Christ Jesus have the singular word of hope. We expect eventually "*to depart and be with Christ*." For Paul this was a yearning, for us it is too often an addendum. Such an orientation gives us both focus and perspective in a world gone mad.

A Series on "Philippians: A Call to Joy"

No. 5: To Live Is Christ, To Die Is Gain

Philippians 1:20-26

Mining the passage:

1. What is the passion of Paul that motivated him to continue with ministry? (v.20)
2. How did Paul view death in light of his passion for Christ? (vv.21-23)
3. With his passion and view of life, Paul was able to live by a philosophy not just for ministry but for his life as a whole. What was his philosophy in life that enabled him to go through even the hardest of trials? (v.21)
4. How did Paul view the rest of his life? (vv. 24-26)

Applying the Principles:

1. Now that Paul has exemplified the centrality of Jesus Christ in his life, how can we make Jesus Christ the center of our lives?
 - a. Make a list of your core values or morals that you believe are "non-negotiables" in your life right now.
 - b. Check where is Christ in all of these core values or "non-negotiables" that you have listed.
 - c. Identify for each core value if you have prioritized Christ or not?
2. Paul has redefined the outlook of life and death in these passages. Do we share with him the same belief when it comes to physical death? Why or why not? How does our view of death affect our relationship with God and others (eg: Ministry, family, work, etc.)?
3. The greater idea of this passage is that fact that Paul's attitude towards life and death is revealed. And so is the reason behind it. When a person faces certain "doom" or even the possibility of dying soon, his/her values are often revealed and made obvious. May it be that when we consider the possibility of facing God, we will consider it of greater joy than the life we have on this earth. How prepared are we to facing God? How much preparation are we doing for that day when we will meet God face to face?

Knowing the Facts:

1. (v.20) "The use of the passive 'be exalted' rather than the active 'I exalt Christ' is unusual. It reflects Paul's conviction that essentially the Christian life involves following the leading of God's indwelling Spirit rather than seizing the initiative and doing things for God (cf. Gal. 5:18)." (Constable, TL., Notes on Philippians, 2009, p.17)
2. (v.21) Paul used the term "to me" to emphasize his personal experience of the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ. The work that Christ finished at the cross became the reason for everything he is doing. His appreciation and reverent gratitude towards Christ is his motivation. The strength he received from the Spirit's enablement allowed him to endure the hardship. The hope that he has in Christ, the idea that he will stand before Him one day drew him and form the goals he had. For many of us today, if we will be honest with ourselves, we would have to say that to live is money, fame, position, possession, and a lot more lists of idols. But for Paul, Jesus Christ was the 'sun' in which his life has been orbiting. (Constable, TL., Notes on Philippians, 2009, p.17)