

Philippians 1:19-30

4-21-10

“To Live Is Christ!”

I. INTRO:

- A. **Story: “Flower Mix-up”**. A **bank** in Binghamton, NY had some flowers sent to a competitor who had recently moved into a new building. There was a mixup at the flower shop, and the card sent with the arrangement read, “**With our deepest sympathy.**” The florist, who was greatly embarrassed, apologized. But he was even more embarrassed when he realized that the card intended for the **bank** was attached to a floral arrangement sent to a **funeral home** in honor of a deceased person. That card read, “*Congratulations on your new location!*”
- B. What’s your attitude to **life**? What’s your attitude regarding **dying**? Why is it that you want to **stay** here? Why do you want to **depart**?
1. So often our answer is so skewed:
 - a) I’m not ready to **die**, I don’t want to miss out on _____ (marriage/kids/see how u’d turn out)
 - b) I don’t want to **continue to live**, I want to get away from _____ (bills, debt, relationship)
- C. Paul is in prison & is facing possible death. So, he’s not just saying these words, it is what he is really facing.

II. TO LIVE IS CHRIST!

- A. **DILEMMA!** (19-23)
- B. (20) **My earnest expectation** - The word is composed of the **preposition away**, the **noun head**, & the **verb to watch**. And indicates *watching something with the head turned away from other objects* (Vincent)
1. It indicates the concentrated intense hope which ignores other interests & strains forward as with outstretched head. (LKGNT)
 2. **So much so that...Christ will be magnified in my body...dead or alive!**
- C. (21) Other Translations:
1. (NLT) **For to me, living** means living for Christ, and **dying** is even better.
 2. (Message) **Alive, I’m Christ’s messenger; dead, I’m his bounty. Life versus even more life! I can’t lose.**
 3. Phillips **For living** to me means simply ‘Christ,’ & if I **die** I should merely gain more of Him.

- D. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Mt.13:45,46)
1. **Jesus** is our *Pearl of great price*, for whom we are willing to part with **all** that we have.
- E. Let us be like the **oxen** which stands between *the plough & the altar*, to work or to be sacrificed; & let our motto be, "*Ready For Either!*"
- F. When **Christ** is your **life**, **death** is not your **enemy**.
- G. For Paul, life *was* Christ! (or Christ Himself) [Centrality of Christ!]
1. Before his conversion he was the center of his own world. A world in which God was a part.
 - a) A world in which, to climb to its top, each rung was based upon his own righteousness, or how well he as performed. His God hung on a great carrot stick in the sky.
 - b) But when his conversion came on the road to Damascus, his **conversion** was a **revolution**.
 - (1) Paul was no longer the center of his universe. Christ was.
 - (2) Paul knew he was held in such esteem by Christ...*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* Gal.2:20
 - (a) What Paul knew, "*Jesus loved Paul, Jesus died for Paul*".
 - (3) For Paul, **death was simply much more of Christ...It was gain!**
- H. For Paul, death was **gain!**
1. **It** is a **release** from earthly troubles for sure; **it** means a **re-union** with other Christians loved ones; **it** means **reward** for present service rendered to our Master; & **it** means **realization** of all our highest, truest, & dearest longings.
- I. Some might read it this way instead:
1. For to me, to live is **money**, & to die is to leave it all behind!
 2. For to me, to live is **popularity**, & to die is to be forgotten!
 3. For to me, to live is **power**, & to die is to lose it all!
 4. For to me, to live is **possessions**, & to die is to take none of them with me!
- J. (22,23) **To live on** - To **remain** in this life would result in additional fruit.
- K. **To depart** - To **depart** this life would mean being with Christ.

- L. (23) **Hard-pressed** - I'm pressed in a corner between 2 strong desires.
 1. **Caught between a rock & a hard place!**
- M. **Be with Christ, which is far better** - *That* is the central fact which makes death gain to the believer.
 1. To depart from this life here, is to be **with Christ!**
 a) All other aspects of the gain are *subsidiary/secondary* to that, & are included in it.
 b) We always quote **Rev.21:4** & miss what's most important in **vs.3!!! (read)**
- N. **DECISION!** (24-26)
- O. His decision...he will remain. **And he was the apostle which once enjoyed the unique experience being caught up to the 3rd heaven. (got a taste of glory)**
 1. 3rd heaven = (1) where birds fly, the firmament; (2) the starry heavens; (3) the heaven of heavens, God's throne.
- P. He will **remain** - Paul recognized he must not selfishly seek to **desert the duties** which God had given him.
- Q. **REQUEST!** (27,28)
- R. **Change of tone & change of direction** (1:27-2:12)
 1. Paul moves from *information* to **exhortation**.
 2. **Whatever happens to him, the Philippians were to continue conducting themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel.**
- S. (27) **Your conduct** - He calls the church to appropriate conduct.
- T. (27b) **A unified stand & unified minds** would be the best witness to the world for the gospel. **Especially if they stood strong through the sufferings they were to endure(29).**
- U. (28) **Terrified** - to frighten, to startle, to terrify.
 1. **The metaphor is from a timid horse** (Lightfoot; LKGNT).
 2. **Perhaps an allusion to Cassius who at the battle of Philippi committed suicide at the fear of defeat.** [In **Dante's Inferno**, Cassius is one of 3 people deemed sinful enough to be **chewed** in 1 of the **3 mouths of Satan**, in the very center of Hell, for all eternity, as a punishment for killing Julius Caesar(**instigated the plot**) The other 2, **Brutus & Judas Iscariot**]
 3. So Paul is saying even if you're faced with death, **"don't be like a timid horse or a wimp like Cassius."**
 a) Have **unflinchable** steadfastness, even in the face of persecution!

V. **REMINDER!** (29,30)

W. 2 wonderful privileges: To **believe**/trust in Christ & To **suffer** for Christ.

1. God is honored by both.

X. God runs a **costly school**, for many of his lessons are learned through **tears!**¹

1. Soon school will **close** for us, the **end** of our school term is closer everyday.

2. **Don't run** from difficult lessons; **Don't flinch** from the rod of discipline.

3. **Cheerfully endure** to the end, **then** we will **graduate in glory**.

4. Paul's life was a model of suffering.

a) **Suffering**: confirms the believers faith; brings him/her in closer contact w/the Lord; & provides a vehicle for making commitment real & tangible.

Y. The worlds finest china is fired in ovens at least 3 times & some many more.

1. The famous *Dresden china* is always fired 3 times.

a) **Why so many times with such intense heat?** This makes the colors **brighter**, more **beautiful**, & permanently **attached**.

2. **Metal** bends best when softened w/**fire**.

Marble take shape only under the splintering blows of a **chisel**.

Wood, with the abrasive scrape of **sandpaper**. (Swindoll)

3. **We** are fashioned after the same principle!

a) The human trials of life are burned into us numerous times, & through God's grace, **beautiful colors** are formed in us & made to shine forever!

Z. The 18th-century Bible commentator **Matthew Henry** expressed this confidence in words he hoped would be read after his death by anyone who might unduly mourn his passing. **He wrote:** **Would you like to know where I am?** I am at home in my Father's house, in the mansions prepared for me here. I am where I want to be - no longer on the stormy sea, but in God's safe, quiet harbor. My sowing time is done and I am reaping; my joy is as the joy of harvest. **Would you like to know what I am doing?** I see God, not as through a glass darkly, but face to face. I am engaged in the sweet enjoyment of my precious Redeemer. I am singing hallelujahs to Him who sits upon the throne, and I am constantly praising Him. **Would you know what blessed company I keep?** It is better than the best on earth. Here are the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. I am with many of my old acquaintances with whom I worked and prayed, and who have come here before me. **Lastly, would you know how long this will continue?** It is a dawn that never fades! After millions and millions of ages, it will be as fresh as it is now. Therefore, weep not for me!²

¹ Streams In The Desert; Sept.2; pg.335

² Our Daily Bread, Sunday, May 27