Philippians 1:19-30

“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