



MATT BLACK, Sun, November 25, 2018
livinghopechurch.net

5 | PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26

JOY IN CHRIST CENTERED LIVING

4 Foundations of Christ Centered Living

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Gaining Purpose

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Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!
2. Last small group this week.
3. We need some help after the service to set up fellowship hall. See Pastor Mike.
4. Accident: Thank you for your prayers
5. Funeral: Thank you for all who came to my father's funeral, sent cards, called.
6. Dec 8 mandatory play practice.
7. Welcome to Mike Moffat. Prayer over him with elders.

Introduction

Open your Bible if you will to **Philippians 1**. The title of our study this morning is: "Joy in Christ Centered Living."

Gaining Perspective: the Accident

Our text today is Philippians 1:21, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21). The passage is all about the struggle in our hearts to want to be in heaven. Paul is under house arrest, chained to a Roman soldier. He wants to depart, but he also wants to preach Christ.

About ten days ago, I was reminded of the preciousness of this verse. I was turning left onto Wheaton Road to go to the church. My car was stationary, and all the sudden a big Ford F-350 careened into me at almost full speed, pushing me into oncoming traffic. That's when another truck smashed into me head on. I thought I was going to die.

In that moment, I had no fear of dying. I felt the overwhelming love and grace of God. But this text has renewed meaning to me. "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Near death experiences help us to gain perspective as to what is important in life and in death.

Union with Christ

Make no mistake: the only thing that matters in life and in death is Jesus Christ – not what is your stock portfolio, the size of your family, your wealth or how many vacations you've been on. The only thing that matters is your union with Christ. That's what Paul says: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." What does Paul mean when he says: "to live is Christ"? How do you live Christ? He's talking about his union with Christ.

According to Wayne Grudem union with Christ is "*the fact that we are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ, and we are with Christ.*"¹ In other words, union with Christ is our nearness to God through Christ. We are united to God in Christ. He is with you, before you, behind you, above you, below you, and inside you. Everything that happens in your life is God working good for you by bringing you nearer and nearer to him. No matter what is happening in your life, God is working it out for your good and his glory.

¹ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 840.

Romans 8:28, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.”

Psalm 34:9-10, “Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”

I’ll say it again: the only thing that matters in life and in death is Jesus Christ. Someone once said, “Only one life, ‘twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.” True statement. The only life worth living is the Christ-centered life. This was Paul’s creed. That creed was expressed to the church in ancient Philippi, located in the country of Turkey today. He said, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain” (1:21). This should be our purpose statement. It’s our doctrinal statement. It’s our creed. It’s our purpose.

How can I live a meaningful life for Christ? Paul gives four pillars in the passage this morning. Let’s read it.

Scripture Reading

Let’s stand and read our passage today, Philippians 1:18-26,

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

This is God’s Word.

1. THE CHRIST LIFE IS THE **JOYFUL** LIFE (1:18-19)

A CHOICE TO REJOICE

Paul says in 1:18b, “Yea, and I will rejoice.” Despite what is happening in life, I have cause for rejoicing. Despite of my circumstances. In spite of my failures and pride, I can rejoice. Make the choice to rejoice. Paul was under house arrest in Rome, and he could have chosen worry, anger, and a whole slew of toxic emotions. He chose to rejoice.

We need to **choose to rejoice** in every circumstance. Paul elaborates further in Philippians 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” There are many reasons to rejoice, but Paul’s main reason is that he is eternally connected to Christ, and so are you if you have entrusted your life to him. **“For me to live is Christ.”** Therefore,

rejoice. Everything that happens in your life is a sovereign act of God designed to draw you nearer to him. And it ends in a fully realized union with Christ: “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

TWO REASONS TO REJOICE

Paul could choose to rejoice because God was going to work everything out for his salvation and deliverance into the arms of Jesus. There is coming a day when we will all hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” We will hear that because of the work God began in us and promises to complete when Jesus returns in glory (1:6). There are many ways that God is doing this good work in us, so there are many ways in which we all ought to daily rejoice. Can I show you several things you should rejoice in right now?

There are two things that Paul says will “turn out” for his “deliverance” so that he will not be ashamed when Christ comes: help through **prayer** and help through the **Holy Spirit**. God is working on our behalf through both human and divine means.

Yes, and I will rejoice,¹⁹ for I know that through your **prayers** and the help of the **Spirit** of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance (1:18b-19).

*Rejoice in the **Prayers** of the Saints*

God promises to sustain you through the prayers of the saints. That’s what he promised Paul and that’s what he promises you. We all have a responsibility to pray for one another. The prophet Samuel once said, “God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you” (1 Sam 12:23). There are many kinds of prayer, but praying for the saints is called intercession. We are called to listen to the prompts of the Spirit to pray for one another.

Pray for one another. God is working your final deliverance through the prayers of the saints. Rejoice that God’s people are praying for you. So much of the prayers that take place for you are anonymous. You don’t even realize all the prayers that are going up for you. Rejoice! Prayer changes things. Prayer is working on your behalf.

The fountain of all prayer is the ministry of intercession going on right now by our Lord Jesus. And his prayers are moving in all of us who know the Lord. His prayers move in us to pray for one another. Listen to the voice of the Spirit in you to pray for the saints around you.

Power of Prayer: Mike Moffat

We have among us an example of miracle working prayer. Mike Moffat received the prayers of the saints. God heard our prayers and has sustained our brother.

I want you to understand that God uses our prayers. You may say, if God is sovereign why do I need to pray? Because in God’s sovereignty he has chosen to use secondary means. He has chosen to accomplish his will through the requests of the saints. Therefore, if you do not pray, God will accomplish his will another way. We do not serve a God of fatalism. You need to understand that. God uses secondary means, like the things you do,

in order to accomplish his will. This does make him less sovereign, it demonstrates how gracious and kind God is to use broken people like us.

But there is another reason to rejoice. Not only in the prayers of the saints, but also in the help of the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice in the Help of the Holy Spirit

God promises to sustain you through as well through the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. What a precious title for the Holy Spirit. This was Paul's help and this is your help.

God's grace is sufficient for you, and that sufficiency manifests in your life through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in you both conviction and comfort.

God is working on our behalf through both human and divine means. The divine means is the Holy Spirit.

Yes, and I will rejoice,¹⁹ for I know that through your **prayers** and the help of the **Spirit of Jesus Christ** this will turn out for my deliverance (1:18b-19).

Dear saint, you have been **sealed** with the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:14). The Spirit in you is God's mark of ownership. He's not abandoned you. He is the Helper. He is your Comforter. He is here to help you grow in Jesus.

He is continually giving you either **comfort** in *righteousness* or **conviction** of *sin*. Respond to him continually. That's your help. He's always helping you – never condemning you. There is no condemnation, but you need to respond to his ministry in you. Rejoice child of God. Every circumstance, everything that occurs in your life is God the Holy Spirit communicating with you. Yield to his ministry. What is he doing, but making you conformed to the image of Jesus? The blood of Christ has accomplished it, and the power of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is working in you. **Receive the help of the Spirit of Christ**. Rejoice in his help! You are not alone. You are never alone!

Rejoice in Your Final Deliverance

Paul says because of the prayers of the saints and the help of the Holy Spirit, "this will turn out for my deliverance" (1:19b).

The Christ-centered life is built on joy. Paul says, "Yes, and I will rejoice" (1:18b). I'll rejoice because no matter what happens, I will finally one day be delivered. I will cross over the River Jordan to the Land of Canaan where I will live with my Lord Jesus Christ. It's a long journey on this side of the Promised Land, but I'll get there.

The journey of this life in the flesh is long and tedious, but I have a promise that God's working in me for my deliverance through the saints' prayers and through the help of the Holy Spirit. I am not alone. I am never alone. God is with me. The saints are praying for me at all times. Jesus is making this happen in heaven through his ministry of intercession.

2. THE CHRIST LIFE IS THE **PURPOSEFUL** LIFE (1:20-21)

A COURAGEOUS PURPOSE

Paul says in 1:21, “For me to live is Christ...” This is our life’s purpose.

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. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (1:20-21).

Paul begins by saying he wants to live his life in such a way that he will not be ashamed at the Lord’s return. That’s his “eager expectation and hope.” Now the language here is a settled conviction. Hope in the Greek mind is not wishful thinking, but a settled and sure expectation.

Paul has an “eager expectation.” This has “the idea of ‘watching something with the head turned away from other objects’. Paul’s attention is wholly occupied with one thing, to the exclusion of others.”² Paul has one single passion: the honor of Jesus Christ. This one thing gives him courage. If Christ is everything, and for me to live is Christ, then I will live courageously.

I will live with “full courage” for one purpose: to magnify Christ.

A MAGNIFICENT PURPOSE

Paul says, I’m going to “magnify Christ in my body, whether by life or by death.” That’s his purpose, and that is our purpose. To honor, or literally “magnify” Christ.

Now Christ is already all in all. He is everything. But people are blind to that. So I must open their eyes and magnify Christ to them. I must see him magnified in my body, but what I do, what I say, by my life. I must read of him in the Word in all his greatness and magnificence. I must magnify him to the world. “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

As magnificent as Christ is in reality, he is diminished in the hearts and minds of the world. They don’t see reality. So daily, I’m going to open up reality to the hearts and minds of the lost. In every little thing, I’m going to demonstrate the greatness of Christ in my life.

OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT

Therefore, we sign on with Paul’s creed in 1:21, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain...” Everything I do is Christ in me and Christ for me.

Why do I hunger so much for **holiness**? For me to live is Christ.

Why do I care about advancing the gospel? For me to live is Christ.

Why do I constantly yield my life to Christ to do what he wants? For me to live is Christ!

² J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 86.

Everything I do is Christ. Everything he brings in my life is for the magnification of Christ. Hallelujah.

To Die is Gain

Paul says, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain...” When I die, I meet Christ. When I die, I have no more sin or sorrow. When I meet Christ, I can cast my crown before him. The world cannot take what is most precious to the Christian. You can take my life, but then: “to die is gain.” I gain all of heaven, all of Christ. That’s what heaven is. It is gain. Not because of the streets of gold or the River of Life or the cities with music that is beyond anything I’ve ever heard. It’s not heaven because of the marriage supper or the trees with 12 different kinds of fruits. Heaven is heaven because of Christ. I want to be in heaven because he is there!

3. THE CHRIST LIFE IS THE **LONGING** LIFE (1:22-24)

Paul says in 1:21, “For me to live is Christ...” This life with all the rebellion and wretched sin in this world is **not somewhere we want to live forever**. We will live here one day on a renewed earth, but right now we are waiting for Christ to wipe out all sin from the world at his second coming.

So if you are a Christian here today, you are not a citizen of this place. You are just passing through. **You are a citizen of heaven**. Philippians 3:20, Paul says, “our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

This world is not our home. We long to be with Christ. We don’t look for full satisfaction in this life. We can only enjoy the good gifts God gives us in this life in relation to our faith in Christ. We fear God and we enjoy his good gifts. But this is not our long term home.

Camping out

Paul says we are just “camping out” on this old earth. Look at verse 24:

But to **remain** in the flesh is more necessary on your account (1:24).

Remember Paul is a tentmaker. The word “**remain**” is from his tentmaking vocabulary. It literally means to “camp out.”

Now I like camping. But I like it for about a day or two. Maybe a week if we are hunting. But then, I need to get back home. Some of you ladies, your idea of a good camping trip is roughing it at a hotel or motel for a weekend. No matter who you are, camping is only good for a short amount of time, but then you are ready to go home.

THE LONGING TO DEPART FOR HOME

As Christians we are not at home in this world. We are citizens of another place. But if we have to stay here, the only reason to remain is what Paul describes as “fruitful labor”. “If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me” (1:22a). If I’m going to be **camping out** here on earth, then I need to see **spiritual growth** in me and in you and all around. That’s a massive part of the Christ-centered life we are going to talk about in a moment.

But look at what Paul says: he doesn’t know which to choose, because departing is so much better than staying here on earth.

²² ... Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again (1:22-26).

Death Will Be a Departure

Paul says, “I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” (1:23). Wouldn’t you agree? It’s so much better to be without sin, without sickness, and all the effects of sin and rebellion. It’s so much better to depart and be with Christ. I love the word “depart.” It means to be “unloosed” from your burdens (*analuó* = I unloose for departure). This word was used by three different people groups in antiquity.

Sailors: Used when they would unloose the moorings from the dock when they were ready to sail from one port to the next.

Soldiers: to depart from one campsite to another. We are just camping out in this life. A camping tent is a good description of our physical body. We are so preoccupied with our tents. Like our bodies, a tent gets old. It wears out (2 Cor 5:1).

Farmers: Used when the yoke was lifted from the work animal at the end of the day. The animal was unloosed from the harness. Jesus used this analogy to encourage us to allow Him to rule our lives (see Mt 11:29). When our yoke is removed, we get to enter the kingdom of heaven (see Mt 25:21, 23).

Death Will Be an Encounter

Our departure to be with Christ will be an encounter. It is not the departure that makes the death of a believer sweet; it is the arrival! Heaven is not about what's there; it's about who's there. Of course there will be family and friends, but the main attraction is our intimate, face-to-face encounter with Jesus. Heaven's main attraction is God, not stuff (see Jn 14:3; 2 Cor 5:8; 1 Thess 4:17).

Death Will Be Much Better

Meeting Christ in death will be so much greater than anything in this life. Paul says in 1 Cor 13, “we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face....” Right now life has so many heartbreaks and difficulties. It’s like trying to see through a broken mirror. But one day we will see Christ face to face.

Paul saw heaven for a moment and it was too much for him to even explain (see 2 Cor 12:1-4). Truly, “eye has not seen nor ear heard” the glories of heaven. As Paul says, “It [death] and departure from this earth is far better for all of us.

THE LONGING TO REMAIN

I love the language here. To remain means to “camp out” a little longer. Paul says we are just “camping out” on this old earth. Look at verse 24:

But to **remain** in the flesh is more necessary on your account (1:24).

Remember Paul is a tentmaker. The word “**remain**” is from his tentmaking vocabulary. It literally means to “camp out.” This life is a temporary campout. I don’t mind sleeping on the ground for a night or two, but I’m always ready to sleep in my own bed. I don’t mind the rustic facilities, but I’m so glad for the comfort of my own home.

Right now we are just camping out, but soon we will be home. We are longing for home. How about you – do you long for your home in heaven?

4. THE CHRIST LIFE IS THE GROWING LIFE (1:25-26)

FRUITFUL GROWTH

The reason to stay “**camping out**” on earth for now, even though heaven is our home country, our citizenship is there – yet it is necessary for **fruitful labor** to remain here.

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

Even though the decision is hard to want to remain on earth, it’s important for us to focus on the present: for the saints’ “progress and joy in the faith” (**1:25**). That’s what is needful right now. That’s what we need to focus on. We can’t just check out. Paul will not check out. If you are alive, then your purpose of living in Christ is to be the hands and feet of Christ. Remember he said, “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18).

So Paul is convinced that it is better for the overall plan of God to be “all there” while he’s on earth.

²⁴But **to remain in the flesh** is more necessary on your account. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in

the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again (1:22-26).

He wants to remain in the flesh in order to magnify Jesus in the saints.

GLORIOUS GROWTH

Paul says in 1:26, “so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.” When they saw Paul they could only give glory to God. Here was this self-righteous sinner, now humbled.

Glory is all about what Jesus has done. He’s done it all! Living for Christ is the only life worth living.

Conclusion: Rich or Bankrupt

During the civil war, there were so many millionaires in the south. They all had confederate money. When the North won, all those millionaires became bankrupt. That’s how people are without Christ. They think they have so much, whether it be money, reputation, security, popularity in this life. But there’s coming a day when we die. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain!

Life in Christ is amazing. I wouldn’t have it any other way. But when we depart, that’s when all we’ve done for Christ will come to be so valuable. And those who do not have Christ will all be bankrupt. For those in Christ, in life, we are rich, and in death we are rich in the Lord. For the lost, you finish and lose everything!