

Priority - Phil 1:19-26

The **Apostle Paul** had carried the gospel thru much of the Roman empire & he was headed to the parts he hadn't been yet

but instead of new cities & new churches

he was imprisoned for **over 4 yrs** – in 2 different places
& it looked like he may soon **be executed** for his faith

but **in the midst** of his dire circumstances –

Paul was 100% confident - that **God's purpose** for his life would NOT be shaken

He **was fastened** to a roman soldier 24 hrs/ day by a long chain – which, if we'll think about it – that would **test** our 'witness' for the Lord more than any temporary trial / struggle

& yet – we read in **v.13** of **Ch1**- that "***the whole palace guard had come to know that Paul's chains were "in Christ"***

Paul didn't see **his chains** as a defeat – but as an opportunity to **Magnify Christ**

Paul was also dealing with the extremely painful knowledge that some **within the church** were only preaching Christ out of selfish ambition (*in 60ad – just like now*) . . .

In fact, some of these "brethren" actually were preaching with the motivation of **INCREASING** Paul's affliction

& yet **v.14** of **Ch1** says - "***and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear***"

Paul didn't see this "**Infighting**" among believers as a defeat – but as an opportunity to "**Magnify Christ**"

Whether of **trials** from **Outside** the church – or trials **Inside** the church . . .

Paul responded to them both the exact same way –
& we're going to **clearly see** that response today

What we're going to see today is **the POWER**
that having the **Right PRIORITY** - Gives a Christian's life

The way we **Look** at our *circumstances* –
The way we **Feel** about our *circumstances* - & most importantly,
The way we **Respond** to our *circumstances* . . .

Are **ALL** radically changed when our **SINGLE PRIORITY** is changed

Let's Pray

Phil 1:19

19 For I know that this [trials outside / inside the church] will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Paul confidently says - For **I KNOW** that '**this**' will turn out

On a '**human**' level Paul has no idea what's going to happen
but on the '**spiritual**' level – he was **100% confident**

Paul was **confident** because he **KNEW** (as he wrote in **Phil 1:6**)
that ***He who had begun a good work in him –
was faithful to complete it – until the day of Jesus Christ***

& ***he was confident*** because he **knew** that either way
This Trial was not his final Chapter –
He was **passing through** this trial – just like all the rest

& ***where we see*** that confidence the most –
is in **THE single PRIORITY** in his life – *which we'll see in just a few Vs's*

But first – he continues his confidence in **V.20**

Phil 1:20

20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death

'Earnest Expectation' means LIT staining/stretching the neck to see –

Hope = Confident Expectation

Paul's Earnest & Confident Expectation was –

That **NO Setting** – **NO Situation** – **NO Trial** – **NO Test** . . .
would cause him to be ashamed

& **not only that** – but with all **boldness** - Jesus Christ was going to be **magnified** in Paul – whether by his life or by his death

THIS was his **single-purpose** - - his **single goal** !

that **Christ** would be **Magnified** – *by his life, or by his death*

Paul *was so confident* of this **Single Purpose** (to *Magnify Christ*) . . .

that **EVERY** Circumstance – **EVERY** Trial – **EVERY** Set-back –
Became simply *another opportunity* – to **Magnify Christ !!!**

THIS – is an All-Encompassing **SINGLE PRIORITY** . . .

& we **CAN'T** have this confidence – *unless Jesus Christ* holds
the **Single Priority** spot in our lives

So often we divide our lives into “compartments” –

“**Religious**” - “**Secular**” – “**Selfish**” . . .

& then we try hard to be “**Religious**”

when we're in the “**Religious**” compartment

I gotta tell you – that **doesn't** magnify Christ

Because **He's not looking** for *a compartment* of your life –

1Cor 10:31 says

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

God wants the only **# 1 PRIORITY spot** -
regardless of what activity we might be engaged in . . .

He's looking for our lives to Magnify Him
whether **working** – or **caring for kids** & a home –
whether **eating** or **drinking** . . .

God's desire is for - ***“whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”***

& **when we begin** to honor God in **Every area** of our lives –
We begin to see God **work** – really work - & really **bless** us

But when we **compartmentalize** God to just this little part of our lives
over here – Well . . . it just doesn't really work !

Because God can't be magnified in a compartment –
He can't allow His glory to be seen in just one compartment

1Cor 6:19-20

***19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?
20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.***

God wants to dwell in **ALL OF YOU** – not just one compartment

& that's why **Rom 12:1-2** is such a key Vs.
to understanding how our lives are TRULY Transformed

It's not just a **“religious”** compartment added to the life we already have –
God wants to do a complete **transformation**

Rom 12:1-2 → →

Rom 12:1-2

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies [ALL of yourself] a living sacrifice [be consumed by God – Can't consume a "compartment"] , holy [seperated unto God], **acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

2 And do not be conformed to this world [take on it's nature], but be transformed [get a completely new nature] **by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove [know] what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

& **THAT** – is Exactly what Paul's **Single Priority** is –

His life is a living sacrifice – so he fully trusts God in **EVERY** Circumstance

& his **SINGLE PRIORITY** – is to Magnify Christ –
whether in the circumstances of his life – or in his death

Why does having this **Single Priority free us** SOOO MUCH
from the **anxieties** & **fears** of this life ?

because – of **WHO** that **Single Priority** is . . .

Phil 1:21

21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

What was the secret to Paul's incredible ability to tolerate extreme trials from outside & inside the church?

His **Secret** – was the **Single Priority** of his life
For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

That's **WHY** Paul responded *in grace* to every **trial**, every **disappointment**
This **SINGLE PRIORITY** is what drove him – & it's what sustained him

& this is the **ULTIMATE PRIORITY** for **every** Christian !!!

in Fact *this may be* one of the best **1-Verse definitions** of Christianity in the Bible - - - ***To live is Christ - & to die is GAIN***

James Boice says in this life we have ;

FAITH in Christ

FELLOWSHIP with Christ - & we

FOLLOW Christ . . .

& then – when we are done – **it is to our gain** . . .

Faith in the **person** of Jesus Christ – *not religion* – not improving our **moral standards** – not **cleaning up** our act . . .

Christianity is **FAITH** in **the person** of Jesus Christ

Fellowship with Jesus Christ – it's not what we **DO** *for Him* that makes us Christians - it is our **fellowship** *with Him* as our Lord

it's **Loving** Him, **Knowing** Him, **Communing** with Him . . .

& **often** our "**duties**" actually **get in the way** of doing just that

Following Jesus – Jesus' call to His disciples was "**follow me**" – **no** explanations, **no** sales pitch – **just** "**follow me**" . . . & He still uses the exact same approach

For us to say "**TO LIVE IS CHRIST**" means we have ;

FAITH in Christ

FELLOWSHIP with Christ - & we

FOLLOW Christ . . .

But in order for us to truly say "**To Live Is Christ**"

there's **a crucifixion** that **must** first take place in our own lives

it's the one Paul wrote in Gal 2:20 → →

Gal 2:20

20 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.

beyond the cross of crucifying our flesh – Our “SELF”
is the glory of Christ living in us

& then . . . ***to die is Gain*** - because then we'll be with Christ forever –

& in one of the most amazing statements in the Bible

1Jn 3:2 says

2 . . . but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Now **THAT** would be **GAIN** –

When **CAN** *know Christ* in an ever deepening way –

In **whatever** we are doing – whatever God's will is for OUR lives . . .

In whatever we are doing **TODAY** - We can ask ourselves –
What is My Single Top Priority ??

Is it my relationship with Jesus Christ . . . or

Is it **money** (oops)

Is it **success** (forget it)

Is it **happiness** (it's fleeting)

Whatever we are doing today – we **CAN** do it as unto the Lord

we can do it with Jesus Christ as our **PRIORITY**

we can do it to **Magnify** Christ

The question is – ARE WE ?

Let's try it right now . . .

I'm going to say "***For me to live is . . . _____***"
& then you put in your own **PRIORITY**

"For me to live is . . . _____"

If you are a Christian - - whatever God has called you to do -
you are called to do it - - ***As Unto The Lord***

& **if we are** doing what we are called to do – **AS UNTO THE LORD**
then we can walk in this **SINGLE PRIORITY**

& **when** we begin to walk in this **SINGLE PRIORITY** –
(*no matter what we're doing*) . . .

I promise you it will change the way we;

look at our circumstances –

feel about our circumstances - & most importantly,

respond to our circumstances . . .

& ***one other thing*** - - once we develop this **SINGLE PRIORITY** –
it often presents an **interesting dilemma** for the Christian

& **Paul struggled** with this dilemma in the next 3 Vs's . . .

His **absolute confidence** in his glorious eternity –
made it hard to decide what his preference would be . . .

Phil 1:22-24

22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.

23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

Paul was having trouble trying to decide whether he wanted
to stick around– or catch the next train to glory

Guys – a Christian’s **view of death** should be one of total Triumph

No matter what this temporal world can throw at us –
no matter the suffering our living for Christ might bring . . .

it is **not even worthy** to be compared to the triumphant glory
that will be revealed in us when we
get to the **GAIN part** of our relationship

Rom 8:18

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Every person on this earth is going to experience SOME suffering -
believers & non-believers – that is the nature of this fallen world –

& so there’s really only one difference . . .

The suffering **Believers** go thru - is Nothing compared
to the glory that will be revealed in us

But **Unbelievers** leave this place of *temporary suffering*
& go to a place of *eternal suffering* –

THAT (unfortunately) is what the Bible clearly says

& so – it may be **right** for an unbeliever to fear death –
but not so with the Christian

Heb 2:14-15 says

***14 . . . that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,
15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.***

Paul was certainly NOT held by the fear of death - & neither should we be

Paul's **PRIORITY** was set on magnifying Christ - & not being ashamed

& **BECAUSE** of his **SINGLE PRIORITY** . . .

For him . . . ***to live is Christ, & to Die is GAIN*** – end of story

What a **great way to live** –

So great we can't decide which way we'd whether go . . .

Stay here & follow Christ - & depart to be with Him –

which Paul says here in V.23 – **is FAR BETTER**

and **we can say** the exact same thing –

if we name Jesus Christ as our Lord & Savior - as Paul did

I pray we would all have this **same dilemma** personally

HOWEVER - for the Christian – the confidence of heaven

does not release us from our role here on earth . . .

& **it certainly** didn't release the Apostle Paul

As soon as he says that to be with Christ would be far better (in V.23) . . .

he **comes right back** to his role as Christ's ambassador –

& we need to do the same thing

In **V.24** He says

24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

Paul says, *Yeah. I long for that day . . .*

However – as long as He still has a purpose here for me . . .

I **need to be** obedient to that –

& I know that all the glory with Christ – will be reserved for me

The **incredible Ch** on the Resurrection in **1Cor 15** is closed with . . .

1Cor 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

& that is the **same truth** we find here . . .

Our **solid confidence** in heaven –
should be **driving us** to continue doing His will every day we're here

& His will for our lives – **always** has to do in some way –
with **edifying** (strengthening) the **body of Christ**

& We see this in Paul in Phil 1:25-26

***25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,
26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.***

Paul is rock solid sure of the **glorious inheritance** reserved for him in heaven -
& so he's **more than happy** to serve the Lord here on earth . . .

Strengthening the body & **spreading** the Good News of Jesus Christ –
until he finally gets his . . . **GAIN**

It's a **great way** to live while were on earth –
& it's the **ONLY** way to make **Dying FAR BETTER** than Living

AND – this **SINGLE PRIORITY** of Living for Christ
to Magnify Him **NO MATTER WHAT** . . .

Will Completely Transform How we

Look at our **circumstances** –
Feel about our **circumstances** - & most importantly,
Respond to our **circumstances** . . .

It's a **WIN-WIN** situation –

Living for Christ here – transforms how we view this life
& *when we depart* from here – it is a FAR BETTER GAIN

God has worked it out so well for us –

We ought to take Him up on His **PRIORITY PLAN**

Paul's **SINGLE PRIORITY** is wrapped in

Phil 1:21

21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

May each of us come to the place where ;

no matter what we're **doing**

no matter what we're **called** to . . .

We can say the same thing –

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.