

To Live Is Christ

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Last week we walked through Philippians chapter 1 12 to 18 and discovered something astonishing. Paul's hardship did not hinder the gospel. It advanced it. The Philippians feared that Paul's imprisonment would have silenced the gospel. But no, Paul revealed rather that his chains were not obstacles. Him in prison was not an obstacle, but that they were instruments, instruments of his grace. Paul used this Greek term which was a military term proe implies the clearing of obstacles. Clearing of obstacles to allow an army to advance. You see that military term and I mentioned that obstacle could have been his chains but it was not. Amen.

And so remember that was from verse 12. If you look at verse 12 of chapter 1 of Philippians, you may turn to it now. You remember that in verse 12 when he used the expression the furtherance of the gospel. That word furtherance is that military term. Paul's suffering was instrumental in advancing the gospel. That was the central point last week. And therefore the emphasis must be on proclaiming or promoting the gospel in our lives rather than fixating on our past or even our current difficulties. What are we magnifying ultimately? What are we magnifying? Is it the gospel of Christ or is it our problems self? So is it Christ that we're exalting? Is it Christ that we're magnifying or is it magnifying ourself promoting ourself even our difficulties that could be promoting yourself and Paul says no I'm not that's not the message I want to share instead of focusing on his current difficulties he's saying this is advancing the gospel beyond what I could have ever imagined and so what are we so he prayed so he prayed and this is the way God answered. This is the way God answered.

Suffering for Christ. We often say that so glibly, don't we? Especially here in the Western world. But in the world where their world where God is using men and women, believers to advance the gospel, they are suffering. And they're they know what that suffering is entails. It doesn't stop with them denying Christ, but in fact proclaiming him even more in their suffering. And sometimes we think when we pray how God is going to answer our prayers, right? How many of us do we really pray like to be more like Christ and then realize you become more like Christ in your suffering? Or do you pray, "Lord, bless my life with more things, more things, more things, more things." Is that truly being more Christlike? Think about it. So, you see, for Paul, his prayer was answered. And he didn't stop said, "This is how God's answering my prayers in suffering." So, he observed correctly, he prayed correctly, and then he lived accordingly correctly. We need that kind of wisdom. Amen. We need to understand what true suffering really means for the believer.

See, Paul's imprisonment placed him in the very heart. You remember, you recall last week, in the heart of the Roman Empire. That was an answer to prayer. You see, every four hours, you remember, he was having a new Praetorian guard chained up to him and he was able to have a

captive audience. You remember he was preaching the gospel to every Praetorian guard every four hours. Every four hours. Every four hours. You see, Satan tried to silence the preacher. But God simply changed the pulpit. He changed the opportunity. Paul's boldness ignited the church. You see, answered prayers in verse 9. Look at it with me. You see, Paul rightly prayed and then the church rightly took the answer. How? They judged the situation clearly. Do you see that? He prayed for judgment, discernment, and they understood his suffering was for a reason. And it wasn't to stop the gospel. It was to spread the gospel. That prayer was answered.

And then the abounding love. You see that? And in knowledge, that prayer was answered. They went to go and love other people more. And they loved each other more. That was answered. They have more knowledge of their situation. That was also answered. What a beautiful thing, isn't it? So, when I'm praying for you, brothers and sisters, this is what I'm praying for. Paul modeled it for me to pray this way. Will you answer like the Philippians? You see believers who once hesitated. Now, you see that word wax confident, they increased in confidence. That's an answer to prayer as well to preach Christ more boldly. I'm praying that I preach the gospel boldly to you and then you here and you take the boldness outside in your respective community that God has placed you as well. It doesn't stop here at the pulpit. It advances as you as soon as you go out that door. May it become real in your life.

You see, he also mentioned that in the last sermon I preached how some preached Christ out of the wrong motive. Remember the mixed motives. One preached out of envy and rivalry which was selfish ambition. How can I exalt myself in this preaching? And then we had another one, another group preaching out of love, which was agape love, sacrificial, selfless love. They didn't have no concern for themselves. They're like, I want to just preach this gospel. But remember what Paul said? Paul refused to be bitter. Paul refused to send a letter to those people that were envying and striving and instead he said Christ is preached and therein do rejoice present rejoice in it. And then he says yea and I will rejoice continually into the future because ultimately the message is getting across no matter the instrument. The word of God does not return unto thee void. Amen.

A person who considers Christ to be everything will not settle for anything less than the best. Again, what Paul said, approve things that are excellent. Do we do that? Do we go is my Christianity the best? Or is it even more excellent way? Do you pray that way? Because that's how Paul prayed for the Philippians. And I pray for you as well for that to happen. And by the way, to have more excellent way even if the circumstances get worse. Right? Think about it. If it's going to be more about preaching Christ more boldly, do you think your circumstance going to be more less hardship or more? Is it really going to be more suffering for Christ or is it going to be woe is me? See, every area of our lives as Christians is a test, isn't it? Every area of our lives are test and so we need more better discernment and how God answers our prayers rather than just focusing on ourselves.

So now we're going to go into verses 19 to 26 which Paul takes us to a deeper level. If you thought that was deep, now he's going to go even deeper because in verses 12 and 18 he shows us how the gospel advances through hardship. And by the way, I pray for Kaviro constantly for breakthroughs to see the hardships that are that actually good. Did you do you see breakthroughs like that in your life? But verses 19 to 26 shows us how the gospel shapes our perspective on life

and death. Let me say that again. Verses 19 to 26 shows us how the gospel shapes our perspective on life and death.

So let us stand out of respect for God's word. Let us read. You read in silent as I read it out loud. Verse 19. For I know, for I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor. Yet what I shall choose, I will not, for I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. May God bless the reading of his word. You may go ahead and sit.

We're going to see Paul's confidence in God's deliverance. Paul's confidence in God's deliverance. I want you to see in verse 19 where it says at the beginning, for I know, for I know. Notice that in verse 19 he's not saying no not I hope not I think not I wish no confident through their prayers the supply of the spirit of Christ he prays I know I know not confidence in myself but rather confidence in the spirit of Jesus Christ his dependence was not on himself it was dependent on the spirit of Christ so he can say I know, I know what the spirit of Christ can provide. Do you have that confidence? Paul believed deeply in the prayers of God's people. You notice that in verse 9, he asked them to pray for him. He knew that God uses the intercession of saints, Christians, as a means of sustaining his servants. In this case, Paul and Timothy, we see that in verse one mentioned and through all of church history, by the way, all pastors and all deacons. You see that in verse one as well. Where he mentioned them. So, by the way, I am grateful. I am profoundly grateful. And I appreciate so much the prayers that you brothers and sisters pray for me. I know I know you are praying for me. I hear it. I know it. And I'm thankful because that's the way Paul postured himself. He didn't just depend upon his own prayers. He asked the church, "Pray, pray, pray."

So, as you pray for the pastors and the deacons of our church, well, one pastor right now, but praying for more pastors. We appreciate that. You see, God uses the prayers of his people to accomplish his goal. This is why we pray for one another. This is why Paul asked for prayer. And by the way, this is why we made available many ways we can emphasize the importance of prayer for one another. Such as recently we put up the prayer request group on our church app and this is open for everyone believers or non-believers you can join that group we also have prayer before our morning worship here at 10:15 in the morning we come and gather and to pray for this worship service we also have prayer after the Wednesday evening service where we gather together men and women and we pray we pray for the service we pray for each other and then Friday we had an all night men's prayer meeting from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. That's something that I this is my first time doing here and I was so incredibly blessed to pray with these men. That's all that there was. This is a desperate hour to pray and we need to go before God for him to pour out his spirit to pour out his power to this church because this cannot come from us. Amen. In the flesh, that's how dependent we are as God's people. God hears the prayers of his people.

So back to verse 19, Paul speaks of the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ. You see that the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ. This is not to Paul a small drip here and there. There's not a trickle of the spirit of Jesus Christ. He says what? A supply. That's the reference is like a flood. A continual flood lord as he's pour as he's asking for. Pray for more supply of him of his spirit amongst us. We need him. We need him just as much as in our salvation to now. It's a continual process. It's not doesn't end with our justification by faith. Absolutely. But in our sanctification, in our growth, in our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, we need more of his spirit. Amen. It's because he sustains us and we realize that he is all controlling and all consuming in our lives.

And so Paul intentionally uses the title spirit of Jesus Christ. I want to just hone in on that for a little bit because it connects his suffering of Christ to the earthly suffering. That's why he uses Jesus Christ. Jesus right God in human form. And mentioning about that's his mentioning of Christ's earthly suffering. And then he uses the word Christ, which is his heavenly messianic term, right? That's the God man. Amen. You have both of that. And he's praying for that same spirit, that same spirit that helped the Lord Jesus Christ in human form to be able to go to the cross and pay for the payment of all of our sins. That same spirit, he's praying for ourselves and our suffering on this earth. Do you see the connection? And then so the Holy Spirit is received by every believer. We know that the moment of conversion he dwells within us. Ephesians 1:13. In whom when you trusted after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. In whom also after that you believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The spirit of sonship. Believers recognize God as father. So now we get to address him as father. We see this in Romans 8:15. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again of to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, sonship. Whereby we cry what? Abba father. Abba father. Galatians 4:6. Paul also says this. And there because we are sons, we are now called sons. God hath sent forth the spirit of his son capital S son into your hearts crying abba father. This word abba father this phrase abba father connects the believer to god in a way that is both deeply personal and deeply rooted in the spiritual adoption brought about through Jesus Christ. He is the one that brought us to the father. Amen.

And so the believer's life is lived in and led by the spirit. We walk in the spirit and consequently bear the spirit fruit. And we see that in Galatians 5. So we live in led by walk in bear the fruit of the spirit. That is a whole sermon in itself which I cannot take time to do right now. I'm setting it aside. But just know that how important the Holy Spirit is in our lives. Back to our context in this book, Paul's designation of the Holy Spirit as the spirit of Jesus Christ is significant. It's not accidental that he puts it and writes it this way. This title connects Paul's present circumstances as to the earthly life of Jesus and links his life to the Lord's current exalted state. You see, Jesus refers to the Lord in his humiliation while Christ refers to the Lord in his exaltation. We often pray, don't we? Lord, help us in our unjust suffering. Lord, help us to exalt Christ in our unjust suffering. And then what do we also pray? We pray that here on earth, not my will, but thy will be done in truth. That is what he prayed in Mark 14:36. By the way, the Lord Jesus Christ, what did he say? Abba Father. You see, now we can express that because of Jesus. He says, "All things are possible unto thee." And he says, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt do." You see, Paul's lack of discouragement stemmed from the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. If it wasn't for his victory, we have no victory. Amen.

So though the Lord's earthly life was far more challenging than Paul's, we never want to equate the two. He accomplished Paul accomplished everything to the Holy Spirit's power. We see this in Acts 10:38 says this, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all they that were oppressed of the devil. And here it is, for God was with him. Just as God was with the Lord Jesus Christ, he is with us. Amen. We know Christ is now seated at the right hand of God the father. We know that because of that we can also in our glorification one day prove just like Jesus proved himself. He didn't have to but he did. He wanted to show us his love. He wanted to show us what the meaning of the cross was. So it was very important for us to know that he ultimately had victory on that cross when he said it is finished, right? It is finished. Meaning the payment of sin, the wrath of God was completely finished for us. And so we have victory because of his victory first and foremost on the cross.

So Paul lived by this assurance and he eagerly anticipated the full manifestation of this kind of victory in his salvation. So I want to just dial in in this word salvation here in the text. It does not mean by the way eternal salvation. That's already been secured in Paul. He was already eternally saved. That's not what he's talking about here in reference to salvation. Rather, Paul was confident because he knew that in all circumstances, whether he was in chains or whether he was out in the free world that for all circumstances were in God's hands. He knew that and he knew that God was assure his safety and eventual victory and what his purpose was for his life. And he realized that the challenges that he faced were actually God's means. It was God's means of transporting him towards God's purposes. Meaning that his chains had a meaning. It had a purpose. And it was God's purpose for him to be chained up. And so Paul viewed all events not just in the present, but from a future perspective. God showed him beyond his current situation, seeing them as intentional contributions to a final positive result or positive outcome, which is the fulfillment of God's ultimate plan. How many of us do we pray like that? God, not just for the current situation, but help me to see beyond the current situation. Help me to see what the ultimate purpose is in my current situation.

So this perspective is a great encouragement for us as believers, is it not to pray this way? Because you see, God will not waste your suffering. God will not waste your suffering just like he didn't waste Paul's suffering in prison. So do you believe God is using your circumstances for his purpose? Do you see the importance of requesting prayers from God's people? Do you rely on the spirit? Supply not your own strength.

Let's go to verse 20. Verse 20. Here we're going to see Paul's passion to magnify Christ. You see that where he says in verse 20, we go back there. It says, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed." In nothing I shall be ashamed. Here he's saying he's saying I want to stretch and like as it were stretch forward. It's a it's an anticipation that's intense. It has a stretching effect. I want an earnest expectation. He's saying there what? To not be ashamed. To not be ashamed. You see his one thing that he has many things that he prayed for was this that he would not be ashamed before Christ. You see, he didn't want to be not ashamed before Caesar, which was the big person at the time. He didn't want to be ashamed by his critics, those who were envying him and striving. Nor did he want to be ashamed before the church of Philippi, as great as that might be. No, ultimately he didn't want to be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. He needs to go there because that's where Paul went. See, Paul's concern when I stand

before Christ, will I have magnified Christ? Is that your prayer? Because Christ, when he is magnified, he is brought closer to people. Do you see that? When he's magnified, he is closer to his people. It's like a telescope. Brother will know what I mean by this telescope. You look at the star, we know it's big, but we don't know until we see it through the telescope, right? That's how we should know. You see, God is big, but we need him to magnify himself because otherwise we will always diminish him. That's the problem with sin, isn't it? Sin always want to diminish God and not exalt God, not glorify God. Sin wants to glorify man and glorify man. This is the problem.

And so Paul in his discernment, he prays, "Lord, I want to magnify Christ through my body." Paul's desire is that he would magnify Christ in his life. See, Paul wants Christ to be seen in not only his body, but body includes his speech, in his actions, his body and his suffering. So Christ being magnified not only in life, right? What does he say? Or by death. That's what I'm going to go to now. He wants to also magnify Christ in his death. You see, for Paul, he was not afraid of death. Paul instead was he saw death as another opportunity to exalt Christ. So whether we live or die, it's all about Christ to Paul. So what are you magnifying in your life and also in your future death? Is it your problems or is it the savior? Is it your critics or is it Christ? Is it your comfort or is it your calling? We must all ask these kind of questions ourselves because in it will verify what you're magnifying. In it will be who you are glorifying. Amen.

So let's look at verse 21 now. Verse 21. This is where Paul's declaration to live is Christ and to die is gain. This is the mountaintop of this particular chapter of verse of chapter one. This is the mountaintop. This is the apex when he says for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. You see to live is Christ meaning life is not about my ministry. Life is not about my success in life. Life is not about how much comfort I can obtain in this life. Life is not about my reputation but rather life is Christ. The most important thing in my life and in your life as a Christian by the way is to have the reality of Jesus Christ in our lives. Amen. I'm talking about everything. This is the heart of Christian living. Christ is the source. He is the substance. He is all satisfaction of our lives. And then he says to die is gain. Meaning that death is not a loss. Death is not a defeat. Death is not an end. Death is gain. Because it brings us into the full presence of Christ. Isn't that what we want and desire?

And so he uses it. Live as Christ. Die is gain, live as Christ, die is gain. For to live is Christ than to die is more of Christ. Another way of saying it, to die is more of Christ. So only the Christian can say this for the unbeliever unfortunately death is a loss. A death is defeat. Death is an end to their temporal world. But for the believer, death is gain. We have eternity before us with Christ and God and all the believers and that will go on for eternity after eternity after that kind of joy and satisfaction that Christ offers us and we get a little taste of that don't we here on earth so what would you fill in the blank with all honesty this is time for you to examine yourself where are you where would you fit yourself in to me to live is what is it your work is it your family. Is it success? Is it comfort? Is it approval? Man, ask yourself this because whatever you fill in there, that's where you're going to go. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Let's look at verses 22 to 24 now. 22 to 24. Spend time by the way with that thought. Okay, but we need to continue on verse 22 24 here. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor. Yet

what I shall choose, I will not. I want to start with that verse 22. He's basically saying, I have these two glorious options before me, which is to live is for Christ or to die is gain. I have these two glorious options. One gets more of Christ, one still remains in Christ and in this life. And so he's saying between these two, he's saying what is the desire here? Paul longs to be with Christ. We see that he describes death as departing. And this expression is like a ship taking off its rope and now it's departing. But as we are in this life, we're kind of tied in. We have to do what we got to do here. That's expression. And so untying this rope binds me to the earth, right? And rather, let me say that again. Untying its ropes binds me to the earth, but when I'm freed, I will be with him ultimately. That's the expression this word departing. So this is worship. This is a way of expressing worship that Lord, if I'm here, I will worship you here and I will worship you in heaven. That worship continues. It's a continual process. And so he sees the need to remain that there's still things that he needs to do and he feels that burden and he goes, I'm struggling here. I need an answer here. And so Paul sees the need of the church. God answers and shows him this. He goes, I want you to stay for the church. And so he's willing to stay for the Philippians. Not for himself, but for them. Not for himself, but for them.

You see, it comes from a heart of a posture of selfless heart. A selfless heart. And Paul's desire was to see heaven and be in heaven. But his mission was still here on earth. And you see this is like Paul. I was thinking about this for a mature believer. Can we all say that Paul was a mature believer that we all aspire to be? The tension we see here is every mature believer longs to be in heaven. Amen. Do we long for heaven? But we still need to labor on earth. There's still more. Amen. So that's what we want to get from these texts 22-24. So if you pray that way, you have that longing but yet you know Lord, if you want me to continue to serve, I will serve. Let that be your prayer. Let that be the answer to your prayer. Amen.

Let's go to verse 25 to 26. We're going to see here Paul's confidence in fruitful ministry. We're going to see that his labor was not in vain, but there was much fruit to be borne. We see this in verse 25 to 26. He starts off saying, "And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." He's talking to the Philippians. I know. I have confidence. God, answer my prayers. I now know I'm supposed to be here. I'm supposed to abide with you for what? For the furtherance. Just like he expressed the furtherance of the gospel. He wants them the furtherance of the gospel and also more joy of faith. It's like I see there's still a lack of joy. I want you to have even more joy in the Lord because I'm experiencing this joy. You see this is what he's remember expression my grace. He's like I want to share what God has been showing in me and I want you to have it selfless heart agape love. Amen. So Paul wants them to grow in faith, grow in maturity, grow in more joy because Paul's ministry produced joy in God's people. When you really are aligned to the scriptures, it is supposed to bring joy to you in your suffering. It's supposed to bring this lasting joy.

I was just talking to a brother. The difference between happiness and joy, one is temporal. Happiness happenings whatever happens in my circumstance I'll be happy joy is a sustaining love that God gives to us comes from external we cannot produce it doesn't produce by circumstance it's produced by God's spirit and that lasts for time and time and time and time through all the hardship through all the trials through everything this is what brings joy and that's why many unbelievers goes where's your joy coming from your life looks bad. Yeah, it's not about my life. It's about exalting Christ. And the one that is illumined and open and goes, "Yeah,

now I understand. Now I understand this joy. I want that joy. Tell me the hope that's in you." Remember that. And Peter, show me what that hope means. I need it because I keep going in this life and trying to get things out of this world with the circumstance. It's not bringing me the joy that you have. Tell me more. Let's take time. Let's pray. Let's take time. I'll share my testimony. I'll share how God was so good to me and all of my hardships. How God was so good to me in my hardships. And this joy did not come from the circumstances. You know it, right? You see it. It comes from God and his spirit.

And he wants that for his people. I want that for you more than anything else because I've seen glimpses of it. I want more of his joy. I want more joy for you guys because of a joyful church is a healthy church. You're not supposed to be stuck in your struggles and your hardships. You're not supposed to be stuck by all the pain and the suffering. That's not the goal. The goal is joy. That's unspeakable joy. As Paul expressed it somewhere else for Christ to be glorified in them. Paul wants their lives to bring glory to Christ whether here in present or in absent. Trials are instruments. Brothers, sisters, your chains may be the very platform that God uses to advance the gospel. Do you see the instruments of your hardship that way? Reject the mediocre life of Christianity. That just wants to be blessed by the temporal things. That's not real Christianity. I'm sorry. That's not biblical Christianity. This what I'm speaking about of Paul is real. That life centered in Christ does not settle for the good or the mediocre. No, it settles for the pursuit of excellence in Christ. The excellencies of Christ, the joy unspeakable, surpassing all glory of this world.

Rely on this kind of spirit that the spirit of Christ gives to you. Remember that expression I gave the branch John 15 it has life because it's connected to the vine. You cannot produce it yourself. As long as you're connected to the vine, you will have the supply. We just need to recognize that more and more. Don't let Satan don't let the world tell you otherwise. To live is Christ, to die is gain. To live is Christ, to die is gain. Live, live with heaven in view. Live with the purposes that God is for you in your hardship. Magnify Christ whether in this life or in the life to come in life and death and joy and suffering. We can magnify Christ in it all. So may we like Paul develop an all-absorbing purpose to magnify Christ. Trusting that our circumstances are always in the sovereign hand of the Lord. It is he's in full control of whatever you're going through right now and he will be in the future because he'll never leave us nor forsake us. So if you don't have that right now, come to Christ. That's the only way you need to be hooked into the vine. And I cannot do this. No one in this congregation can do this. You need to pray. Pray in desperation. Lord, save me. Save me or else I die. Pray that way. Pray in desperation. Because all my brothers and sisters, including myself, we knew had no hope in this life. None. Everything led to death. We saw it. God opened our eyes and he pointed us to the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the father except through Jesus. Come, come.

Let's pray. Father, I'm asking to do a miracle here. Father, I'm asking for those that don't know Christ in this way that Paul experienced Christ. Pray for them. May they come to know the Lord Jesus Christ truly as their savior and Lord through this miracle. Lord, I have planted the seed. I have watered now in prayer. But Lord, you must add the increase. You must add the increase. I am confident that you will, Lord, if it's in your sovereign will to do so. And I just pray for my brothers and sisters here. Continue to strengthen them in their hardship and their trials and their unjust suffering. Help them to continue to persevere for the furtherance of the gospel for the sake

of Christ to exalt him in our lives whether in life or in death. May we exalt him because he means everything to us everything. May you bless this end Jesus name. Amen.