

Philippians 1:21-30

To Live is Christ

Image Church // Philippians Week 3

MPS: Understanding *to live is Christ*, and overcoming the hindrances to living it out.

Introduction

Hey good morning Image family, I hope you're doing well! If you have your bibles go ahead and grab them and turn to the book of **Philippians**...

We're continuing our journey through the book of **Philippians** this morning, and I told you when we started this series that the book of **Philippians** is going to challenge us and stretch us in what it means to be a Christian and what it means to grow as a Christian... And that's exactly what you're going to see this morning...

I feel like for many of us there's a **space** in our lives that we're always trying to figure out, a space where there's a lot of tension... And that's **the space between what we say we believe, and how we actually live our lives**...

I don't know about you, but I wrestle in this space a lot, where I find myself coming face to face with God's Word and thinking, *if this is really true then there are some significant and fundamental things in my life that have to change because they don't line up with what the Bible teaches*...

One Pastor says that we approach our faith like this: *rather than placing our lives up against the bible and striving for our lives to match up, we keep taking things out of it until our lives finally match up, and the saddest part about that exchange is that you and I are the ones missing out when we do that.*¹

¹ Trevor Joy. *Lives Worthy of the Gospel*.

See, there's a life that **Jesus purchased for us** with **His** life, death and resurrection, and the Bible shows us what it looks like to participate in that life, but the rub is that, the **life** that **the Bible invites you into isn't about you**...

And that's where things get hard for us, which is why for many of us, we claim Christianity, but we don't actually live out the things that Christianity actually teaches...

And the reason why, *if we're honest*, is because we want the Christian life to be about **us**, we want all the *benefits of Christianity*, but we don't want the sacrifices of Christianity... And the minuet we come up against something that makes us **uncomfortable** we just lay that truth aside...

But here's the thing about the life of Jesus, and Christianity as a whole, it's a call to hand over control of your life, a call to lay down your desires, a call to serve, a call to give, to sacrifice, to love and to put others above yourself...

Which sounds crazy, because it is, it's a counterculture way of living... And it will never make sense if you don't understand it in light of what's been extended to you through the gospel.

Here's Paul's goal, he **wants our lives to make sense in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ**.

And so, the question I want you to consider this morning is: **Does your life make sense in light of the gospel?**²

Alright, let's dive into our text for today...

Philippians 1:21-30

² Ibid.

21 For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. **22** Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. **23** I am torn between the two.

Now there's a dilemma that I bet most of us haven't considered very often... *You wake up and you're like, Man, I am so torn today, do I want to go and be with Jesus or do I want to stay here and point people to Jesus?!? I'll just have to play it by ear today!*

Then Paul says: I long to depart and be with Christ—which is far better—**24** but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. **25** Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, **26** so that, because of my coming to you again, your boasting in Christ Jesus may abound.

Paul says it's better for Him to be with Christ, but it's more necessary for him to stay, **why?!?** So that Christ may abound in others!

What you have to is in all of this is that Paul views life on earth as the opportunity for fruitful work for God's kingdom, not his own...

I think one of the biggest reasons why we don't face **Paul's dilemma** more often is because our focus has shifted from God's kingdom our kingdom...

- Now, I'm not saying the answer is to drop everything and go into fulltime *vocational ministry*, I'm not saying don't do your job, or that it shouldn't be a priority...

What I'm saying is that we have to **live with a different perspective...** A **perspective** that impacts the way that we view our lives, our job, our family, the church, our city, our neighbors, and even the nations...

Here it is you ready? **To live is Christ**

We talked about last week that **the goal of the Christian life is that Christ is glorified in everything...**

Well now Paul shows us how that's possible... By pulling back the leaves and showing us the roots...

But here's the question, what does that actually mean?!? *Some of yall grammar people are like that doesn't even look right?!?*

Here's what Paul means by this: that life is filled up with, and occupied by Christ, that everything Paul does is inspired by Christ and done for Christ. Christ alone gives inspiration, direction, meaning, and purpose to his existence. His life is totally determined and controlled by his love and commitment to Christ.³

IOW: Christ shapes his mission and his motivation in this life!

Here's what that means for us: That Jesus isn't to be compartmentalized into one or two areas of our lives... He's not an accessory, He's not our homeboy, He's not *you're better life butler*, and He's not someone you interact with once a week or a few times a month, or when you need something...

He Characterizes your entire life... He's what life is about!

Let me give you an example: Think about a waffle, all the little squares- we'll let God into this one and that one- kind of like we do with the butter (*unless you're like my wife and you don't put butter on your waffle- which is weird*) ... But there are some squares over here and over there that we don't let God into...

That's not how it works- **Jesus is like the syrup** that runs into every square of your entire life!

- And even beyond that, He's the one thing that makes your *waffle-of-a-life* rich with sweet goodness...

See for Paul, his greatest joy was knowing Christ... This wasn't a **duty** thing for him, this was something that brought him **delight...**

³ Hawthorne, G. F. (2004). *Philippians* (Vol. 43, p. 55).

Why?!? Because in Christ, **Paul found something better than anything this world could offer, and something so great that even death couldn't take it away...**

Paul knew what was offered to him in Christ...

GOSPEL

And that's what led to his joyful pursuit- it wasn't easy, but it was worth it for Paul because he knew what was to come for all of eternity...

Ok, so here's my question for you... ***I want to do a little fill-in-the-blank...***

To live is Christ for Paul, it's what brought him the most joy, it's what completed him, it's what sustained him, what is it for you?

- To live is _____?

I want you to fill in the blank with the thing that you lean into the most to be your source of life... Be honest- ***Nobodies going to be looking at your paper- you're in your own house!***

- What is that you want more than anything?
- What is the one thing you couldn't live without?
- What is it that you need in order to feel complete?
- What is it that you count on to sustain you?
- What is the one thing that you think that you need in order to experience happiness?
 - Is it money, or financial stability, savings at certain pt.?
 - A comfortable life? Certain possessions?
 - A promotion, a corporate position?
 - A certain social standing?
 - A better marriage? Kids, Spouse?

I want you to be honest with yourself... We know that Jesus should be the answer but the reality is for most of us, that's just not true...

What is it right now that is your life? What's competing for your affections, what are you longing for? What is it that you're laying down your life for right now?

- It may even be a good thing, in fact really **nothing** that I listed is a **bad thing** in-and-of-itself...

But that's the tricky thing about **idolatry**, it happens subtly where **we take a good thing and we turn it into a God thing** and **that's idolatry...**

Whatever you wrote down in **that blank** other than Jesus, is temporary and it won't ultimately sustain you or satisfy you, and it can't promise you anything long term with absolute certainty...

Here's what you have to understand: **Anything other than Jesus that characterizes your life robs you of the joy that is found in following Jesus, and it doesn't make sense in light of the life that Christ has purchased for you.**

Listen, when **Christ isn't our life** you will always defer the hard truths of the bible and exchange them for something more comfortable- and when we do that our lives don't make sense in light of the gospel,

- And not only that but we miss out on the benefit of obedience and the **joy** that it brings...

Here's the thing about Christianity, it isn't a rule book that we follow for just the sake of following, or to make God happy with us- **Christianity is about knowing and following the person of Jesus...**

And so, when it comes to living out the things that the Bible holds up, **understand this:** the **abundant life** Christianity offers **isn't** a result of just simply following the rules, **it's a result of growing in your love and knowledge of Jesus...**

So, it's not, *man I got to line up my life to the Bible so that I can be a better Christian, or so that God doesn't get mad, or so that I can work the system to get my desires...*

- It's *I want to line up my life up to God's Word because it's going to drive me more toward Jesus!*

***You have to hear me on this:** If we take our eyes off of **Jesus as the motivator and the prize** when it comes to obedience, then we'll turn into legalist, which is the very thing that Christ died to free us from!

So, I'll ask it again, **is it true for you that to live is Christ?** He has to be the foundation **daily**, that we build the Christian life on...

*Let's keep reading, Paul's about to transition from talking about his situation, to talking about the situation of the church in Philippi... He says in **verse 27** Just one thing: As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel, **28** not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of destruction for them, but of your salvation—and this is from God. **29** For it has been granted to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, **30** since you are engaged in the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I have.*
Ok, here's what I want to do, based on Paul's encouragement to the Philippians, I want to use this text to show you **3 hindrances when it comes to our lives making sense in light of the gospel.** When it comes to living is Christ.

Here's the first one:

1. Living with a temporary perspective (v. 27)

Paul charges them as *citizens of heaven* in **verse 27**. Some of your translations may say **let your manner of life be...** The word **manner** there is key and it literally means *to show yourselves to be good citizens...*

Here's the thing, for many of us we're living in light of our **earthly citizenship**, where we're chasing after the American dream, building our lives around our **temporary residency**, instead of living in light of our **eternal residency...**

Listen, it's so easy to get wrapped up into living as if this life is all that there is...

Where we begin striving for the things that our culture says to you go after... See, our culture celebrates things that rival the pursuit of Jesus...

And we get lured in, and we begin building our lives around temporary things, and before we know it **Christ isn't our life...**

And it can be hard to see, because we mask it in **religious activity** like going to church, and even doing things **for** God...

But when you **pull back the layers** the truth is Jesus isn't really at the center of your life, He's not the one thing that driving you, He's not influencing your direction, your purpose and your existence...

And when you step back and evaluate your life, what you see is a life that makes more sense in light of the world instead of in light of the gospel...

- Where our profession defines and drives us more than Christ does...
- Where we've spent more time running after our agenda rather than God's... Our desires over God's design for us!

Let me ask you this, **what kind of perspective do you have on this life?** A temporary one or eternal one?

Do you understand that **James 4:14** says: you do not know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes.

Yet in the midst of that, you have to understand what Christ has promised you in and through His finished work...

See, one of the motivators for *living is Christ* is the **eternal residency with God** that Christ has extended to you!

Paul says in **Romans 8** that you are coheirs with Christ- and in **Ephesians 2** that you are children of God, members of His household...

- This is incredible considering the fact that we were enemies of God that were rebels, that we were wicked and destined for eternal separation from God because of our sin...

Do you understand that you get God one day, that you get to be with him forever! Eternity is forever, this life is far from that...

We have to move past a temporary perspective in this life... We have to not only look back at what the cross accomplished for us, but what the resurrection makes us and promises us and that's a heavenly citizenship forever!

If we don't do that our lives will not be characterized like Paul's, and we won't be living in a way that makes sense in light of the gospel.

Let's look at the second hindrances when it comes our lives making sense in light of the gospel...

2. We try to do it alone (v. 27)

Paul says in **verse 27** that he desires for the *Philippians* to be **standing firm in one spirit, one accord, and contending for the faith together.**

IOW: That they would be unified together around the commonality of the gospel, and contending for the faith of the gospel...

That word contending in the original language means: **struggle along with someone...**

See for many of us the biggest hindrance to why many of our lives *don't make sense in light of the gospel* is because we're not living life together with other believers within the context of a local church...

Instead we're trying to do it all alone...

The picture that Paul's painting here with his words here is that of athletes working as a team, **side by side**, playing the game not as several individuals but together as one person with one mind.⁴

*There's a new show out right now called **The Last Dance** which is centered around **the greatest basketball player to ever play the game, Michael Jordan** and more specifically the **Bull's** run at their **6th National Title... That was 6 not 3 but the way in case you missed it...***

And one of the things that you see is that the times that they struggled throughout the journey **was when there was a loss of focus of the main thing- winning**... Either on the team or with the front office...

See, **unified focus** is everything in sports... How much more should that be true for us as Christians... See, we have to have a unified focus around the gospel taking root in us, and the gospel going out through us...

But here's something else that I want you to see- In 1986, Jordan's 3rd season, the **Bulls** were playing Larry Bird and the **Boston Celtics** in the playoffs...

- *Jordan carried the team the first two Games scoring 49 and 63 and yet they lost both games along with the 3rd and were swept...*

As good as Michael Jordan was, and as great as he played he couldn't win alone- he needed his team- *and this was before the era*

⁴ Hawthorne, G. F. (2004). *Philippians* (Vol. 43, p. 71).

of the supper team, so he literally needed everyone to step up together...

The same is true for us when it comes to the Christian life, **we can't do it alone** no matter how much we think we know, we have to be contending together... There's a reason why Paul uses that word **contending**, or **struggling together**...

Because we need help holding onto the gospel! Holding on when things get hard...

We need help seeing the idols in our lives, we all have blind spots, and even more we need to be spurred on not only in the gospel but to share the gospel!

So, let me ask you, **who are you struggling with, who are you contending with for the sake of the gospel??**

- Starts with being in a community Groups, but not as a means to check the box once a week, but as a bridge to relationships that push you deeper...
 - I know we have gone digital- pick up the phone...

For some of you the biggest hindrance you have is that your trying to live out the Christian life alone... You're not in community...

- **When you're doing that you're saying that the church that Jesus bled to establish doesn't matter...**
 - We need each other- it's why Jesus set things up like He did, this wasn't my idea, it was His!

Let's look at the 3rd hindrance when it comes to our lives making sense in light of the gospel...

3. Fear (v. 28-30)

Paul is calling the church in **verse 28-30** to courageous faith in the face of opposition, and even to suffering...

The **hindrance** for us is that we're afraid of these two things...

We fear man, more than we do God... We care more about what people think about us, then what God thinks about us...

- We're afraid of the label that we think we might get hit with...
- We're worried that we'll have some kind of pressure on us...

We're so worried about what other people think, or how they will respond... **The problem is, last time I checked nobody else gave up their son's life of you!**

See, Paul shows us that **confident** and **courageous faith** is a mark of your life making sense in light of the gospel...

- Not flaunt it, but be intentional with it...

If Christ is your life, then that means you're not ashamed of Him and try to hide him it means that you're proud of Him and look to show Him off any and every way that you can...

See the call of the Christian life includes action that shows others where you stand spiritually... It's why Paul says it's been granted that we believe, but also that we suffer...

Suffering comes as a result of our belief in action, which means that we have to actually be willing to live out the gospel and not live in fear of those who might oppose us...

Are you willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel...? To suffer the opinions of others, to suffer the approval of others, to suffer the rejection, and even persecution of others?

- It may sound crazy but this suffering to that end is actually a blessing! How, because it allows you to participate in the same rejection that Christ participated in...
 - It will force you to depend on Christ alone for approval, affirmation and acceptance.

What are you afraid of? What's keeping you at bay in the Christian life?

Conclusion [VAMP]

Up until around **1967**, there were thousands of babies dying in Australia and doctors didn't know why...

- They finally discovered what was causing it, it was a blood disorder in the mothers where the mom's blood would actually start attacking the blood of her unborn baby...

It was a disease called: ***Rhesus Disease...***

In **1960** a man names **James Harrison** was discovered to have an unusual antibody in his blood... Australia was one of the first countries to discover someone with this type of antibody...

And it was through **James Harrison's** blood that they were able to create a cure for this horrible disease that put about 17% of women at risk...

As a result, James Harrison dedicated his life to donating his blood, and he's donated over 1000 times over the course of the past 60 years...

- And they estimate that he's saved over 2 million people... He's been considered a national hero...⁵

We hear stories like this and we're moved and inspired because this is incredible... ***And yet if we're honest it just makes sense right!***

If you discovered that your blood had a cure that could save millions of lives would you not do everything you could to give as much away of it as you could?

When it comes to the Christian life we have to understand we have been given the blood of Christ that saves us from a disease called sin that has infected everyone one of us and separated us from God...

But Christ's blood has been given to us, and so we no hold the cure for sin and separation from God through the gospel in us...

So, let me ask you, ***does your life make sense in light of the gospel?***

What is it that's hindering you from saying with Paul, to live is Christ!

Some of you need to receive the blood of Christ, others of you need to reorient your heart and live in light of it!

Pray

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2015/06/09/health/james-harrison-golden-arm-blood-rhesus/index.html>