

International Day of Prayer - Persecuted Church: November 6, 2022

Philippians 1:19-29 - To Live is Christ, To Die is Gain

*“Carrying the cross does mean following in Jesus' footsteps. And in His footsteps are rejection, brokenheartedness, persecution and death. There are not two Christ's - an easy going one for easy going Christians, and a suffering one for exceptional believers. There is only one Christ. Are we willing to follow His lead? ”—Hudson Taylor*

In Philippians 1:19-30, Paul is teaching us that **“Suffering is not the end of the story”**

**Truth #1**—Your Prayers M\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 19)

*“(19) for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.*

Are you regularly praying for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are being persecuted? If not, what can you do to change that?

In what ways have you tied trust in God to a specific outcome? (Andrew Brunson story)

**Truth #2**—For to Me to Live is Christ, and to Die is G\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 20-26)

*“(20) I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.  
(21) For me to live is Christ and to die is gain”.*

Paul's main concern is not whether lives or dies, but that he maintains a \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ.

Paul says “for me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”. Take a few minutes to reflect on your life. How would you finish the below statement?

For me, to live is \_\_\_\_\_, and to die is \_\_\_\_\_.

**If you, and I, answer anything but Christ alone then we have divided hearts. If we aren't careful, our allegiance and obedience to Christ can be measured by the degree to which following Him puts us in danger of losing any of the “good” things of life.**

It also becomes very difficult to honestly answer the second part as “gain”

**Verses 22 - 26:**

While Paul states that he would much rather depart this life and be with Christ, he knows there is much fruitful labor for him yet. He understands there are tasks that can be done in the body that we cannot do once we move on from this life.

What fruitful labor are you engaging in for the glory of Christ?

**Truth # 3**—This is B \_\_\_\_\_, We Need Each Other (vs. 27-28)

*“(27) Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel (28) without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved - and that by God”*

In what way might our ability to “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” be dependent on our ability to “stand firm” and “striving together”?

How is opposition and subsequent suffering a sign of their destruction and your salvation?

**Truth # 4**—It is a G \_\_\_\_\_ to Suffer For His Name (vs. 29-30)

*“(29) For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake, (30) engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have”*

How do you understand suffering for Christ as a gift? Read also Acts 5:17-41, Phil 3:7-10

Pauls call the church in Philippi to, as he is, engage in the conflict together. How can we as a church engage in the conflict? (understanding the conflict as the spread of the gospel in the face of opposition)

- Pray - for the persecuted, for those who are going and whether or not you should go to a foreign context? Using one or more the Apps listed (VOM, Open Doors) will open your eyes to the circumstances and conditions of other people around the world. Do you feel a burden for a particular group of people or country? Lean into this. Pray about where God could use you.
- Give - If we don't go, are we giving, sacrificially, to those who are going? to those who are persecuted?
- Go - to those in our communities. Several of us from the church go out on Friday afternoons at 4:15. Prayer walking, praying for those in the community and engaging people in conversation with the goal of proclaiming Christ to them. We could use more people to engage with us in this way. There are sections of Elizabethtown that we haven't been able to walk much. I have a burden on my heart for Middletown, If anyone wants to come out with me, please catch up with me later.

**We know that suffering....** whether it's ridicule, mockery, physical attacks, or some other form of persecution... **is not the end of the story.**