

To Live for Christ
Philippians 1:15-26

Good morning.

Jim Elliot was a passionate evangelist and a martyred Christian missionary.

The pursuit of his life was to intimately know the Lord, to tell others about Jesus, and to obey the call, Christ had for his life.

Jim Elliot committed his life to evangelism and international mission work so, he attended Wheaton College to study linguistics, and there he met his wife Elisabeth.

Following God's call, Jim and Elisabeth traveled to the Ecuadorian jungle to reach a secluded people group for Christ.

On January 8, 1956, while attempting to make contact with a native Ecuadorian tribe, Jim and four other missionaries were speared to death by members of that tribe.

But Jim's legacy lived on through his wife Elisabeth, who moved into the same village with their young daughter, to live among those who had killed Jim and the other missionaries.

His life is a testimony to the world about the absolute worthiness of Christ, and the costly call of the Christian to follow Jesus.

Jim Elliott famously said, "*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.*"

Please open your Bibles to *Philippians 1*, as we continue in our verse-by-verse study of Paul's Epistle to the Church at Philippi.

Last time, we studied where Paul continued in prayer for the Philippians, and communicated that the Gospel being shared, is more important than the trials of this life.

The Apostle Paul was not telling the *Philippians* to have a blind *love* but rather a *love* based on the **standards** of God.

Paul said biblical *love*, is a *love* that has *knowledge and all discernment*, to *approve of the things that are excellent*, i.e., discern the things of God which are more valuable or different.

We learned that Paul's **arrest furthered** the Gospel, as we discussed the age-old question of "*Why do bad things happen to good people?*"

Part of trusting the Lord is trusting Him during the trials and suffering in life. Sometimes the Lord removes the trial from our lives, sometimes He allows trials to teach us a lesson.

Finally, we learned that Paul's boldness to preach the Gospel while under arrest, gave the other Christians around him confidence and boldness to speak about Jesus as well.

As Christians, we are left on earth to represent the Gospel and to fulfill the call of Jesus.

Today, Paul will teach about some of the adversities he faced in the ministry, as well as the importance of living for Christ.

So again, Paul's boldness to preach the Gospel while under arrest, gave the other Christians around him confidence and boldness to speak about Jesus as well.

I. Motives while preaching.

Read *Philippians 1:15-18*

Who was Paul speaking about when he said, "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife"?

There were some, who wanted to have a larger following than Paul and desired to promote themselves instead of Christ. These could also be people who were jealous of Paul's ministry.

However, most commentators think Paul was specifically referring to the Judiazers.

Judaizers were a group of Jews who would accept Jesus as the Messiah but also believed that Christians needed to follow the Levitical laws of the Old Testament, as well as receiving Christ.

Judaizers wanted Christians to adopt some of the Levitical practices of observing the Sabbath and following certain dietary Laws, while certain extreme Judaizers denied the deity of Jesus.

Paul wrote to the Galatian church at length, about these men.

The Judiasers believed that a Gentile had to become a Jewish proselyte to Judaism first, to be circumcised, follow the other Mozaic Laws, and then they could come to Christ.

Paul asked the *Galatians* if they thought they could be right with God, by some work of the **flesh**.

Galatians 3:2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? NKJV

In *Acts 15*, a council was formed to deal with this very question.

Acts 15:8 So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us,

Acts 15:9 and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. NKJV

Paul seems to point out that self-ambition, a desire for strife, or jealousy, as motives for some who were preaching Christ.

There are quote, unquote, pastors today who preach for selfish ambitions, and there are also some pastors who teach an all-emotional Gospel with wrong motives, as well.

The Lord will judge people for preaching with wrong motives.

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. NKJV

Paul said some people were preaching to add pain to his life, but others were preaching the Gospel out of love for Paul, and love for Christ.

Before I share the Word of God, I spend a lot of time studying the Bible because I never want to misrepresent God's Word.

There are times, however, that I may misspeak in a sermon.

Paul is not talking about someone who unintentionally makes an error while speaking, he is referring to people who are preaching Christ from false **motives**.

David Guzik said, “ *Paul's attitude went like this: “If you preach the true gospel, I don't care what your motives are.*

If your motives are bad, God will deal with you — but at least the gospel is preached. But if you preach a false gospel, I don't care how good your motives are.

You are dangerous and must stop preaching your false gospel, and good motives don't excuse your false message.”

“If Paul's imprisonment could not hinder the gospel, neither could the wrong motives of some. God's work was still getting done, and that was cause for rejoicing.”

Paul had a **single-minded** goal and that was to get the message of Christ preached so, he saw his enemies preaching with wrong motives, as another opportunity for the Gospel to be proclaimed.

Paul was not like most American pastors who are envious of other church's ministries.

II. Paul magnified Christ.

Read *Philippians 1:19-20*

Listen to the faith Paul had as he said, “*I know that this will turn out for my deliverance*”, but we know Paul was executed by Rome, so he must have been wrong.

When some people who doubt, read this statement by Paul, they believe Paul was self-deceived and needed a reality check.

(But) Paul was not only delivered from prison but he was ultimately delivered to the very throne room of God!

And notice, Paul said his deliverance would come through two different avenues; the Philippians *prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*.

First, let’s discuss the importance of prayer.

Prayer is communication with God, where we can remain in a continual conversation with God. For most Christians, prayer is an untapped power source!

The Lord has chosen to work through prayer, to teach His children to talk and depend fully on Him!

These early church members trusted in the Lord, not only to hear their prayers and petitions, but they trusted Him to answer them.

James 4:2 you do not have because you do not ask.

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. NKJV

God answers every single prayer from His children, no matter what!

His answers are given in His time, for His reasons, according to His will and good pleasure.

Prayer helps us communicate with the Lord and then helps us discover what the Lord wants to accomplish for us.

Some people may then assume, that everything depends on our prayers but notice Paul said his deliverance would ultimately come through *the supply of the Holy Spirit*.

Paul mentioned “*the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*”, because, without the Spirit of Christ, we cannot do anything of spiritual value.

Wiersbe said, “*The word supply gives us our English word chorus. Whenever a Greek city was going to put on a special festival, somebody had to pay for the singers and dancers.*

The donation called for had to be a lavish one, and so this word came to mean “to provide generously and lavishly.”

“Paul was not depending on his own dwindling resources; he was depending on the generous resources of God, ministered by the Holy Spirit.” (Warren Wiersbe)

The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods but through men. He does not anoint methods or plans, but people of prayer.

Do you want to be used by the Holy Spirit? Do you want to be part of an amazing church?

We must tap into our power source of prayer as we rely on the Spirit of Christ to move and work all things together for good!

Notice Paul said, “*So now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death*”

Paul ultimately would be executed but he believed his body was not his own.

Paul wanted to magnify Christ with his whole being, even his body, which he communicated throughout his walk with Christ.

To magnify is to *make something large, to enlarge something, or to make something great in our sight.*

Jesus Christ is so much greater than our imaginations make Him out to be. He is immeasurable, just as the dimensions of the ever-expanding universe He created is immeasurable.

Paul magnified Christ when he was in prison, he magnified Christ in front of the Church, he magnified Christ before the guards, and he magnified Christ before Cesar’s authorities.

When Paul was preaching the Gospel and starting local churches, he was also magnifying Christ.

Consider this; as followers of Christ, we are to surrender everything to Jesus, including our **bodies**, minds, and souls.

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Paul knew the secret to living. As true followers of Christ, we do not dictate to the Lord what He decides to do with our bodies.

Paul enjoyed the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the supply from the Church so, he was not put to shame. But rather, Christ was magnified through Paul, as he lived for Christ.

III. A tough choice.

Read *Philippians 1:21-26*

When Paul says *to live is Christ and to die is gain*, he was again declaring, faith in the plans and salvation from Jesus. Paul was not afraid of death because, for a Christian, death is **gain**.

C.H. Spurgeon said, “*When men fear death it is not certain that they are wicked, but it is quite certain that if they have faith it is in a very weak and sickly condition.*”

But let’s focus on the words from Paul here where he said, “***For me to live is Christ***”.

Timothy Keller said, “*You don’t get to decide to worship, everyone worships something. The only choice you get is what to worship.*” (Timothy Keller)

What is your definition of life? Well, the answer is found in another question: *What are you living for?*

Why are we here on Earth, and why were we created, are the deepest questions in life.

We were created to Glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Ever since the fall of man in **Genesis 3**, people have searched for anything other than the Lord to give them meaning for their existence.

You communicate to others, that you worship, whatever you spend most of your time and thoughts on. This is also the thing that gives you a sense of meaning to your existence.

When you first meet someone, *what is the first question that you ask them? What do you do?*

Our culture teaches us that what a person does for a vocation is what makes them valuable. “*You are what you do*” or “*You are what you’ve done.*”

As Christians, our **value** is shown by the high price that was paid by the Creator God of the universe, who died in our place, to purchase us back from death into life!

C.S. Lewis said, “*Human history is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.*”

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. NKJV

Life is found in who you know, not in a boyfriend, girlfriend, or in a marriage relationship.

We find real life when we are in a relationship with the author of Life, Jesus.

Paul was confident that no matter what happened, whether he lived or died, either way, was gain for him. Paul believed the Christian life is a win-win situation.

When we realize who we are in Christ, we will begin to live as **victorious** children of God, in a world full of victimized people.

If Paul lived on it was a victory, and if they executed Paul, it would have also been a victory.

Paul said he could not decide which he wanted to experience.

Paul was not sure whether he wanted to be released from prison and live for Christ, or to die and go immediately into the presence of Christ, who gave Himself for Paul's salvation.

Notice, "*If I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor*"

Paul knew one of the many benefits of serving the Lord, was getting to see fruit from his ministry while on earth, and someday receive rewards from the Lord for that work.

But ultimately, it is the Lord who brings about the increase in anyone's ministry.

1 Corinthians 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

1 Corinthians 3:7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

1 Corinthians 3:8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. NKJV

Paul said in ***Philippians 1:23, “having a desire to deapart”***

Adam Clarke said, “It appears to be a metaphor taken from the commander of a vessel, in a foreign port, who feels a strong desire, to set sail, and get to his own country and family;

“but this desire is counterbalanced by a conviction that the general interests of the voyage may be best answered by his longer stay in the port where his vessel now rides.”

The convinced follower of Christ is not suicidal but has a longing for their real home in heaven.

Re-read ***Philippians 1:25-26***

Paul had confidence in the will of God, that the Lord knew what was best for Paul and his ministry. Paul also knew that the Lord would work all things out in his life with the best results.

Even though Paul was awaiting execution, he knew he would remain alive as long as the Lord allowed him to, and continue ministering for the Gospel.

Paul was not going to die one moment before the Lord willed it to happen.

Paul was fully convinced that his physical life here on Earth was an ordered mission from the Lord Himself.

Paul knew his purpose was to make sure the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ would go forth and that he would be an instrument, used in the lives of others.

The only way a person can live for Christ the way Paul did, is to count yourself dead to your flesh and alive in Christ.

Romans 6:8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

Romans 6:9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

Romans 6:10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Romans 6:11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. NKJV

We are **not** to live for a church, a religion, or any person, except Jesus.

Paul's confidence also communicated that the Lord will take care of His Church and His Saints, as He provides whatever is necessary to fulfill our calling.

We can be sure God will do whatever is best for the church.

The Lord will also take care of things that we need to promote our faith and joy in the faith.

IV. Practical Application.

I started this morning by telling you about Jim Elliot, who was a passionate evangelist and a martyred Christian missionary.

The pursuit of his life was to intimately know the Lord, to tell others about Jesus, and to obey the call, Christ had for his life.

His life is a testimony to the world about the absolute worthiness of Christ, and the costly call of the Christian to follow Jesus.

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

1. When Jesus is your life, your desire is for Him to make the **decisions** for your life, instead of yourself.
2. When Jesus is your life, you are shaped by the words of Jesus, not by the opinion of our fallen **culture**.
3. When Jesus is your life, and our fallen culture tries to tell you how to live and think, you will hold **tightly** to the Words of Christ.
4. When Jesus is your life, your **rejoicing** becomes more abundant in Jesus Christ.
5. When Jesus is your life, you will **die** to sin.

Romans 6 is a beautiful description of a Christian who chooses daily to consider himself dead to sin and alive to Christ.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Romans 6:2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? NKJV

Though Christians still stumble at times, sin no longer masters us. Just as a corpse does not lust, covet, or gossip, those who are dead to sin, do not enjoy those temptations.

6. When Jesus is your life, you will only have **one** God.

This is the first commandment to have only one God, yet people can and do make gods out of anything.

Whatever we refuse to give to the Lord God becomes our god.

Living for Jesus means we continually search our hearts and ask God to search our hearts, for idols that steal our time and affection away from total devotion to Him.

7. When Jesus is your life, you use your gifts to **serve** God and others.

Jesus was kind, so we imitate His kindness.

Jesus gave unselfishly, so we set aside our preferences and devote our time, resources, and energy to His purposes.

As Jim Elliott famously said, *“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”*