

Happy Life, Happy After-Life!  
Phil 1:19-26

**Intro:**

It's been a really cool opportunity to walk through the book of Philippians here these past couple of weeks. As I've said in the past, this is a rich book, full of great theology and encouragement for practical living. So far, we've seen a great opening with a beautiful prayer given by the apostle Paul, praying that we would abound in love with knowledge and discernment, being filled with righteousness. Then we saw that Paul recognized his suffering as an opportunity to advance the Gospel, and then last week how he even saw his rivals not as enemies, but fellow laborers in the ultimate goal of preaching the Gospel of Jesus.

So, all of that has come to a head in the latter half of chapter 1 when Paul sets us up for his thesis for the book. He's ultimately taking us to the statement in v. 27 (which we'll actually get to next week) that we are to live a life that is worthy of the Gospel of Jesus, that is honoring to the Lord in every area – personal and public.

But, on the way there, Paul gives us one of the most quoted texts for Christian funerals, a text that we have all heard, but many of us probably struggle really adhere to, at least part of it. It's the following statement: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." We know quite well that living is about Christ, at least we are living as "Christians." But what is "to die is gain" really all about? It's a weird use of semantics that we aren't accustomed to today. We almost always look at death as something to be feared, or as a loss. But Paul is saying that death is gain? How is that possible? If true, then why don't we all seek to die, if that is the true measure of gain, right?

We see this passion in other faiths, in particular, radical expressions of faiths. To think of dying for the faith brings the idea of martyrdom, which today is seen in extremes like radical Islam, crazy Christian groups like those who followed Jim Jones, or in other cultish movements such as those members of the Heaven's Gate cult (late 90's group that drank poison as a way of escaping this world so that they could be caught up on a space ship which was following the Hale Bop comet).

## **Transition:**

There is a precedent we are going to see in this text that Paul is setting, one of eternal perspective in all areas of life. While God is concerned with the here & now, and we even addressed that in the opening sermon of Philippians, Paul is assuring us in this part of the chapter that we have a dynamic existence with Jesus, an existence that is already but not yet. That is, we already exist in relationship and commitment to him and his mission, but we also must remember that we have an eternity with Jesus that is our ultimate destination!

## **Text: Philippians 1:19-26**

### **I. Encouragement from the Body of Christ (v. 19)**

#### **a. Paul was encouraged by the body through Prayer**

- i. There is an inter-connectedness that Paul is acknowledging here. He's not just a lone ranger, but even in prison, Paul is in need of the community of faith, to encourage and to pray for him.**
- ii. There is a need in the modern Church (particular in the West) to look at the needs and burdens of others as an opportunity to join them in community, not to just look on from afar.**

“We should not assume in a culture that emphasizes the rights of the individual as heavily as Western culture that believers will automatically think it necessary to pray much for others, except as their prayers for others somehow meet some need of their own. We tend to spend much of the time we devote to prayer asking God for things that will make our lives more pleasant, and since seeing friends and family members in difficult circumstances is unpleasant for us, we sometimes pray for their deliverance from hardship. But even so, our prayers are often self centered. The first step in applying this passage to ourselves, then, may simply be to ask God

to give us a genuine love for other Christians and an understanding of their need for our prayers.”

– Frank Thielman

**1. This is a great reason we take prayer requests – though we may not know all these people, we are in community with them through the connection of Jesus!**

**b. Paul was strengthened by the Holy Spirit (through the prayers of others)**

**i. Remember that his persecution was severe, more so at times than other times. He was able to continue in ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**ii. Many of us know of the hard times of others, and because of our innate desire to be “fixers” (we want to help solve peoples’ issues, correct their wrongs, or get them out of trouble), we struggle to look at praying for the strength of the Spirit as a viable reaction to suffering.**

**1. Bill Baker – major heart condition this past spring, his emails kept coming with thanks for prayers – I struggled to see the validity of that, but I see it now.**

**c. “This” is referring to the persecution/imprisonment/rivalry**

**i. Remember that Paul is setting us up here for his main idea – even though he is suffering, he lives in the flesh unto Jesus – and his impending death bears a measure of excitement as he will be with Jesus!**

**II. Example to the Body of Christ (v.20-24)**

**a. Paul wanted to honor Christ in everything**

**i. Acts 20:22-24 (MSG) - But there is another urgency before me now. I feel compelled to go to Jerusalem. I'm completely in the dark about what will happen**

when I get there. I do know that it won't be any picnic, for the Holy Spirit has let me know repeatedly and clearly that there are hard times and imprisonment ahead. But that matters little. What matters most to me is to finish what God started: the job the Master Jesus gave me of letting everyone I meet know all about this incredibly extravagant generosity of God.

ii. **1 Cor 10:31 – “so whether you eat or drink, or WHATEVER you do, do it all for the GLORY OF GOD.**

b. **Whether alive or dead, I will LIVE WITH CHRIST! (22-24)**

i. **Life is about labor for Jesus**

1. **For Paul, it was laboring with these churches (writing letters, praying, pastoring, visiting, rebuking, encouraging, etc)**

2. **For us, it's laboring with the mission of God**

a. **Mission of God – God's plan of redemptive history – to seek and save the lost, to bring about restoration of relationship and ultimate salvation for all people! Jesus said, “I have come to seek and to save that which is lost.”**

b. **We labor with the mission of God wherever God has us – job, family, neighborhood, church, etc.**

ii. **Death is to be present with Jesus**

1. **This is the ultimate hope (Phil 3:13, Titus 3:7)**

**III. Commitment to the Body of Christ**

a. **“This” is referring to “To live is Christ, to Die is gain”**

i. **Paul was aware that he was needed in the local churches. He was the apostle, the church planter, the missionary. He saw both dying to be with Jesus and living to co-labor with Jesus as equally wonderful!**

- ii. **So, his desire to work with the churches, to labor with God in the mission of God brought Paul as much joy as did his eternal presence with Jesus which would come after he died on earth.**
  - 1. **Essentially, he says, “As long as I’m here, I’m so glad to be a part of the community of Jesus! I’ll serve this community with joy as long as I can. Then, when I die, I’ll be present with him forever! Either way, I’m with Jesus!**
- iii. **“This” is a great attitude for us to have! We don’t need to just hold on until the end of this life, and hope that we make it, and then have fulfilling joy. We can have unspeakable joy as we labor together with God now – “TO LIVE IS CHRIST!”**
- iv. **We have a very negative view of death, but death is about being present with Jesus forever! (verse: absent from body...)**
  - 1. **Quote from NIVAC, p 88-89**

**Conclusion:**

As we are studying Philippians together, let’s spend time reading and re-reading this book together. Let’s let the tons of truth saturate our hearts and our community this summer. Let’s pray together...