

Philippians 1:19–26 (NKJV)

19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, **20** according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. **21** For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. **22** But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. **23** For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. **24** Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. **25** And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, **26** that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

Is there anything that you know about that is **scheduled in your near future** that will determine whether you **live or die**?

Is there anything you are facing that you know could have dire consequences to your future life?

Many of our families have had medical tests that have that kind of an element to them. If the test shows cancer, our lives may change on a dime and we might have very little time left to live on this earth.

Right now there is a lot of talk about nuclear weapons. That too could have dramatic impacts to our lives.

Certainly the economic impact of some political decisions are predicted to do great harm.

How do we **face** that kind of stuff. How do we **think about** it? How do we see it so, not only will it **not rob us** of our joy, but it will be **met** with joy?

We turn to Paul again this morning. Paul is not speaking about this from a seminary where he is talking about **some theory** from some **cushy job**. Paul is **preaching** good doctrine while he is **living** good doctrine. And he is in a situation that I am afraid would have some of us **immobilized** in fear. Let's learn from our friend Paul this morning how to face this kind of situation.

Now, let's not beat around the bush here. Paul was facing an imminent and real threat to his life. He was going to be tried in a Roman government trial. The Romans had a justice system that **could not be counted upon** to promote justice. So he knew that he could not predict what the outcome would be. Even though he knew he was innocent of any crimes, he did not know if the court would find him innocent or guilty.

Think about what that would be like. How would **you** handle it **today** if you were arrested and held on trial for, let's say, a hate crime and the penalty is 20 years in jail. Really think about that if you can. How would you **respond**? That truly is the reality of Paul's situation.

Imagine what kind of letter you would write to your friends. Do you think they would **be overly encouraged** by what you might say? Would they gain courage by reading what you say?

I think it is not until we can grasp Paul's reality that we can glean the riches of what he **has to teach us** this morning.

***This is the goal. We want to be able to answer this question.

What do we need to change to face our threatening circumstances like Paul faced his?

OK let's see what Paul says.

19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

The word for know in the Greek is Oida. It means having complete confidence.

Now this passage is usually taken two ways. And there are heavyweight theologians on both sides of the fence. Does Paul know, is he completely confident, that he will get a **good verdict** in the Roman court? Or is he completely confident that no matter what happens to him he will receive **eternal deliverance**?

To be the truest to the text I side with those who think Paul knows he will be delivered from a bad Roman verdict in this immediate instance.

There are a few reasons.

First I don't think Paul's eternal deliverance would have anything to do with the Philippians praying for Him and the Holy Spirit being supplied for Him. Paul would have likely attributed his eternal deliverance to the work of Jesus Christ.

Second, the word oida is used twice in this passage. And both uses are referring to this deliverance. At least I think it would be logical to think so.

In the first Paul says-

For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance

In the second Paul says-

And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, 26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

If Paul knows he shall remain and come see them again, I don't think there is any reason to spiritualize things here. He knows the verdict will be for him. But now

think about this. How would he be so confident? It is most likely through **supernatural revelation**. He could not know by any other method. He could not be so confident. If the word used was similar to our **“I think”**, we could come to a different conclusion. But the word used here seems to eliminate that possibility. Now how do we then take the later section in this passage regarding life or death?

Well we have all known Paul to take side roads in the middle of one of his discourses. And I think that is what he does here.

If we cut out vs 21-24 we would have Paul telling the Philippians that Paul will receive a good verdict as a result of their prayers and the provision of the Holy Spirit. In the process Paul will not be ashamed and that Christ will glorify Himself. He says, **“as always”** and I think the **“as always”** extends to Paul’s thinking about his whole life. So this next event will not be anything out of the ordinary. Christ exalts Himself in me whether I live or die. His living and dying, in **this** case may not be the present issue. But it is just a statement of fact about how **Christ always magnifies Himself** in Paul’s living or Paul’s dying.

Then Paul talks about he regards life and death.

And I think this is of particular importance to us in determining how **we** can change to face difficult circumstances like **Paul** did. We may not always be given a word from God about the outcome of a situation, like it looks like Paul may have had. But we can always **think** like he did about our **lives and deaths**.

We will touch on this later.

So his side road takes him into how he regards life and death. For Paul, living is Christ and dying is gain.

To live is to live in Christ and to bear fruit.

To die is deliverance

And if Paul had a choice it would be a tough one. Now the way Paul speaks here is a little confusing. Did Paul actually have some kind of choice here? And if he did have a choice, and he does not know what he would decide, then how would he know for sure he was going to be delivered?

I don’t think this “to live or die” choice is one immediately in front of him. I think that this is not a real choice he is facing. It is a theoretical choice. But it reveals the dilemma Paul would have. Paul is teaching the Philippians how to think about life and death in these circumstances.

We find, in the end, that he would choose to live for the sake of the Philippians. And in this case it seems like that is why God has revealed to Paul that Paul will continue to live. Paul is confident that this is exactly what Paul will get to do.

Then we leave the side road and come back to what he was telling them in verse 19 with more detail.

The Roman verdict will be good. I will have more time to serve you. And their rejoicing will hit its high point when, not only does Paul not die but he actually will show up and visit them in the future.

I think that is the best way to view this passage. That is not how I viewed it in the past. But for now it seems like the best way to stay true to the text.

OK let's go back to the second half of verse 19.

I know I will be released,

through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

First we see that Paul credits the Philippians prayers as the means of God **providing deliverance** to him. So that is evidently what they were praying for. We probably cannot make too much of this, but it is good to know they were praying according to their **best intent** for Paul, while maybe **not knowing** what God really had in mind. It might be much like we pray for those we love who are ill, or Christian brothers in other countries who are in jail for their faith.

God is answering the Philippian prayers. We need to keep this in mind when we pray. It certainly **does not change God's mind**, but prayer is **always used** in the process of a movement by God.

Then he says **by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.**

The word for supply is a Greek word that describes a full, bountiful, and sufficient supply of what is needed.

We cannot read the New Testament without realizing how much the Holy Spirit is necessary for in our Christian lives.

Pertaining to Paul's situation especially Jesus told his followers not to worry about what they would say.

"for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matt. 10:19–20)

The spirit also intercedes for us when we are praying. The spirit is power for us in evangelism.

Following is a quote from MacArthur:

To the Ephesians Paul wrote that the Lord "is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Eph. 3:20). Later in Philippians he said, "My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). The Spirit produces in the believer's life an abundant harvest of spiritual fruit: "love, joy, peace,

patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23).

So Paul was not a guy to take credit for these accomplishments. He was quick to ascribe the **fingerprints of Jesus** in his life to the **power of Jesus** in his life. We all need a boatload of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives to live and minister victoriously.

20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

So Paul’s deliverance will be **according to his earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed**

The word for **ashamed** is usually used in the sense of disgrace that one experiences when they fail God. The people who trust and obey God avoid this shame. While the guilt of our sin is forgiven in Christ, our shame from sin remains to keep humble before God. Now Paul had plenty of things in his past I would guess he felt ashamed of. His persecution of the Christians had to be one of the greatest disgraces. So this is not saying that he feels no shame for things in the past. But that is not what is in question here. Paul is being called before a judge for his presentation of the gospel. And Paul is not at all afraid that **this truth exposed will cause him any shame**. Paul did not commit some crimes against the state that he is trying to keep hidden. No, Paul boasts of the gospel and what Jesus Christ has accomplished. He has **no reason** for shame.

Isn’t it a lovely thing when we are **living** in such a way and **standing** for such wonderful things that when called to account, when our deeds are exposed, we are not in the least bit concerned of **being ashamed**. Oh that every moment would be lived that way in our lives so that at no moment we would be ashamed. **but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.**

On the contrary to being shamed by disgraceful truths being revealed, Paul is more likely to **make a bold attack**. He will not be timid fearing the truth will come out. No. That is the posture of most criminals brought before the court. But Paul will take this opportunity to **boldly proclaim** why he is in prison. He fully plans to share the gospel in his defense. And in the best sense he could not be **more proud** to do so. He will be bold.

Then he says, **as always**. I think this is where he extends his conversation into a generality of all life. It is as if he is saying this principle of being bold for the gospel and not experiencing any shame is a continual thing from regeneration to

the grave. So **right now** Christ will be magnified. I will not be ashamed. God is going to use **this trial situation** just like **every situation** I find myself in, for His glory. He will be magnified in my person. And this would be true whether it is **in life** or whether it is **in death**. In this instance Paul was sure that it would be **in life**. But it wouldn't really matter one way or the other, he is saying. That launches him into the rest of what he has to say. And this is what we really need to get I think.

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

***Warren Wiersby says this:

Philippians 1:21 becomes a valuable test of our lives. "For to me to live is blank and to die is blank ." Fill in the blanks yourself.

"For to me to live is money and to die is to leave it all behind."

"For to me to live is fame and to die is to be forgotten."

"For to me to live is power and to die is to lose it all."

No, we must echo Paul's convictions if we are going to have joy in spite of circumstances, and if we are going to share in the furtherance of the Gospel.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!"

Do you see the theme we keep running into? To have joy, our lives must be dedicated to something **far greater** than our own lives. If your life is being lived in order for **your** greatest pleasure, or **your** greatest comfort or **your** greatest honor or **your** greatest temporary enjoyment, you **will not** have a sustainable joy. There are too many things that can **take away from us** that which we are living for. But when we live **for Christ**, there is **nothing** that we live for that anyone can **take from us**. Even if they take from us those who we love and the circumstances that we most like, even if they take our lives, they have not taken from us that which our life is focused on. That is a life that is free to have joy in every circumstance.

Rom 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written:

"For Your sake we are killed all day long;

We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height

nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jim Elliot captured this well when he said **He is no fool to lose what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.**

***Maybe this should be our prayer this week.

Lord show me how.

I want to say

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

Please Lord, show me what is taking up some of the place **You** should take. So I can put that thing where it should be and give **You Your** rightful place.

Think about this. Part of the problem with most of our lives is that while we sentimentally would like this to be true of us, that “to live is Christ”, we do not put the steps to it to make it happen.

Again, when you look at your intentions, assume that how you view your own intentions are just as likely self deceptions as they are genuine desires.

What would a person who believes that “to live as Christ” do? Not intend. But do?

What would a Christian mother who believes that “to live as Christ” do?

A Christian father

A Christian wife

A Christian husband

A Christian child

A Christian employee

A Christian in our social settings

A Christian in our church body

What do we know from scripture what a person in these circles should look like?

We have enough biblical background to easily know what that looks like.

Will we buy into what the scripture really tells us that God wants **in every area of our lives.**

Again the prayer:

***Please Lord, show me what is taking up some of the place you should take. So I can put that thing where it should be and give you your rightful place.

This is the path to joy that cannot be stolen or shaken. To live for Christ instead of for anything else.

Our brother Paul knew this. He lived it.

Now let's look at the full statement.

To live is Christ. To die is gain.

For a believer there are only two states of being. We either live in the state we are in. Or we die and we move to a different state of being.

We live. And ultimately we die.

Paul saw those two directly related. And they were both seen as beneficial. And they were **both for Christ**. One is for **living** a life in Christ. He will go into more detail about that. And the other is living in the **fulfillment** of the life in Christ. It is the gain of the reward and the eternal life with Christ.

He saw both of them as being positive. Both as being constructive. But he preferred one over the other. We will see why.

22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. 24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

We need to think about what Paul is saying here. Here is a life filled with **purpose**. He does not say, if I live longer I can fish more and hang out with grandkids and have more leisure time. No. He uses that dirty **L** word. **Labor**. This ought to give us a clue about **life in Christ**. It is committed to **doing labor**. Have you ever considered that it is **labor** that gives your life **purpose**? Really, when do you feel **really good**? Even in a normal day to day life, is there not a deep sense of satisfaction when, instead of wasting time on stuff that is **not labor**, you **do something** and accomplish it and look at it and say, **that is good**. I did that thing.

I am hoping to retire soon. But I have no hope to **cease labor**. I only hope to have more time to labor in the things that I think are important. If you want to have joy, fill your life **with labor**, especially for the good of others. Don't let a day go by that you do not **make an effort** to meet a need of someone else. Try that and you might experience more and more of what Paul experienced.

This is how Paul thought.

If I live... because I am living to meet needs, and because I am doing it in service to Christ, I will have **fruit** from my labor.

I have often told young people that the reason they have such **low self esteem** is because they are living for that which has **so little value**. We are created for better things. We generally **experience the value** of the thing we are **most committed to**. When we commit our life to Christ and what Christ wants done,

we tend to experience **great value**. When our focus is on ourselves and our own happiness, we tend to experience **little value**.

We do not experience greater value by being more important. We experience greater value by being committed to something of greater value than we are.

That is how it works.

It truly is more blessed to **give than to receive**. If we sit around waiting to receive, and evaluating our lives by how much we receive, we will not be happy.

That is pretty much guaranteed. But if we lay ourselves down as a servant, we will find that we are happiest. It makes no sense to the world. But Christ told us it would be so.

; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two,

OK so Paul has a problem, maybe real or theoretical. If real, it would be a tough one.

Both have exceedingly good outcomes. If they did not, it would be an **easy** decision.

Have you ever considered that if that choice is **easy** to you, you are **not thinking about it like Paul**? Paul did not say, that would be a piece of cake decision because dying would get me out of all my work, all my struggle, all my turmoil. Dying would be an easy out. Therefore, I wish I could die. It is a no brainer. I would choose to die.

Paul most emphatically did not say that.

Neither did he say that he would choose to live for all the **pleasures** and **opportunities** that life would present for him. We might think that, especially those who are young, but that is not what Paul said either.

I think we get clues on a **joyful demeanor** if we listen to Paul's reasoning here. When you truly live for Christ, you learn to **care about** that which **Christ cares most about**. You become dedicated to the mission of Christ. That becomes more important than your preference. This is what he said.

25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, 26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

Basically Paul is saying I know that God has something more important for me to do **prior** to me being with Him. And so I am **glad** to do it. Because to live is Christ. Look at what Paul remains for. Look how he sees his life.

For your progress and joy of faith.

Paul did not see his continued existence for **his own pleasure**. He did not see death as the avoidance of displeasure. He saw life and death as being more purposeful than that. If he lived it was for the Philippians progress and joy of faith. Notice we have joy mentioned again.

Why are you alive? How do you really see it? What purpose is there for your breathing?

Look how Paul saw it. He did not guess. He knew if he was breathing it was to serve. Why are **you** breathing? Do you think it is for a **different** reason? If so that might be at the heart of why it is hard to hang onto joy. When we live to be served, we have lost our purpose. Paul never saw himself that way. He lived to serve, just as Christ lived to serve.

And Paul is hoping to give them a **real present**. He is hoping to cap off their love and comradery toward him by **visiting them**. When they hear that he was found **“not guilty”** they will rejoice. But when he shows up, they will rejoice **even more**. And that is the kind of thing that is icing on the cake for a guy like Paul. He lives to see these people prosper.

***Maybe this should be our prayer this week.

Lord show me how.

I want to say

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

Please Lord, show me what is taking up some of the place you should take. So I can put that thing where it should be and give you your rightful place

***This is the goal. We want to be able to answer this question.

What do we need to change to face our threatening circumstances like Paul faced his?