

Subject: A Christ-Centered Life

Scripture: Philippians 1:19-26

Paul faced some difficult circumstances, but he wanted the church at Philippi to know that God was bringing good things out of a bad situation. Our text describes the advantages of adversity. Someone else wisely said: “A smooth sea never made a skillful sailor.” William Shedd wrote: “A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.” As we have seen already in our study of Philippians, Paul wrote this letter from prison. He refers to his bonds (chains) in 1:13, 14, and 16. The Apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation while he was on the island of Patmos “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:9). John Bunyan was in jail for his faith when he wrote his classic story, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Despite the trial of being a prisoner, despite the people who were trying to make things harder for him (vs. 15), despite the threat of death, Paul did not give up or lose heart because his life was focused on the gospel and Christ. All that mattered was for Christ to be glorified in his life. Paul is an example of a Christ-centered life...

1. A life with PURPOSE

He was confident of his deliverance (*soteria*, the word for salvation). This may refer to his release from prison, but most likely refers to his eternal security. Whatever he may have in mind, this much was sure...Paul knew his trials and suffering were temporary. God had something better in store for him.

Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.*

Romans 8:29-31 ²⁹ *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.* ³⁰ *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* ³¹ *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

2. A life supported by PRAYER

His confidence rested in their prayers. Paul prayed for them (1:3-5, 9-11) and they prayed for him. This is how the Christian life works.

Romans 15:30 *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.*

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.*

What a blessing to know that others are praying for you.

3. A life supplied by the PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The word “supply” describes a full, sufficient supply of what is needed. The Holy Spirit is our resource for every need. He supplies guidance. He supplies power. He enables us to produce fruit (the fruit of the Spirit): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

4. A life focused on the PRIORITY OF MAGNIFYING CHRIST

Paul knew he would not be ashamed (disappointed) because the priority of his life was to magnify (exalt) Christ in his body, whether by life or by death. His body would be a vessel in which others could see Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ¹⁹ *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?* ²⁰ *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

The role of believers is to magnify Christ in a world that tries to minimize Him. This was Paul's earnest expectation or hope: no matter how his circumstances turned out, Jesus would be magnified. Like John the Baptist, his attitude was “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

5. A life with the PROMISE OF ETERNAL GAIN

Christ was his reason for living, so death would just relieve him of suffering and burdens and usher him into the Lord's presence.

Paul was hard-pressed between two choices: a desire to depart and be with Christ and a need to stay and help other believers. If he continued to live on earth he would have more opportunities for bearing fruit, yet he had a desire to depart (die) and be with Christ. The Bible describes death as a departure.

2 Timothy 4:6-7 ⁶ *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.* ⁷ *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*

At the airport there are monitors that post arrivals and departures. Paul said to depart and be with Christ would be “far better.” He had obviously thought a lot about that.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 ¹⁷ *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;* ¹⁸ *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Colossians 3:1-2 ¹ *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.* ² *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

It makes sense to set our hearts and minds on things above when you realize what believers have in heaven: our Father is there; our Redeemer is there; some of our brothers and sisters in Christ are already there; our citizenship is there; our names are recorded there; our treasures are there; and our eternal future is there. A little boy was flying a kite which was no longer visible in the low-lying clouds. A gentleman asked, "What are you doing, son?" "I'm flying my kite," replied the lad. In jest the man asked again, "How do you know there's a kite up there?" The boy said, "Cause, mister, I can feel the tug." Do the eternal realities of heaven have a hold on your heart?

We have thought about what it means to have a Christ-centered life...

- 1) It is a life with purpose
- 2) It is a life supported by prayer
- 3) It is a life supplied by the presence of the Holy Spirit
- 4) It is a life focused on the priority of magnifying Christ
- 5) It is a life with the promise of eternal gain

If your life is not centered on Christ, then it must be centered on something or someone else. And if that is true, then to die is loss.

Mark 8:36 *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*