

# Joy in Life or Death for the Gospel

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Preacher: Brady Owens

[ 0 : 00 ] We are going to be looking at Philippians this morning, chapter 1, verse 19 through 26. And as soon as it comes up on my phone, I'll pray.

Then we will get started. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your grace upon us. And we long to know and understand more of who you are, that we might be changed by our relationship with you. And we pray that you would open our eyes and our ears to your word, that we would be convicted of the truth, that we would be encouraged by what you have done. And Father, we do pray that you would help us to have revival as well, for us to repent of our sins, for us to have a life that honors you, regards the word highly, and seeks after you.

And so we pray that you would help us in that. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So, Philippians chapter 1, verse 19. My NASB has a tendency to put punctuation where I would not necessarily put it in some cases.

This is one of those, because I think the end of verse 18, where he says, And in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice. Mine has a comma, and it goes into 19. I think a period is appropriate there, and the beginning of the sentence would be verse 19.

[ 1 : 28 ] For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether my life or my death.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which to choose.

But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart to be with Christ, for that is very much better. Yet, to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

And we'll stop there. I love that. One of my favorite passages. I have a lot of favorite passages, but one of my favorites. So, it's pretty obvious that we're going to talk a little bit about death this morning.

[ 2 : 42 ] And I want to just make a couple of statements about it before we start. Number one, Dr. Steve Lawson, in his little commentary on Philippians, says this. He says that we do not know how to live until we know how to die.

Our life and our death should match and go together. But one of the things that we have to think about is that as we look at this, the application of the idea in talking about death is not about how we should think about the death of somebody we love, but our own death.

And I think it's important to say that because I believe very firmly that the scripture teaches us in Thessalonians that the death of a loved one is something that we are to grieve. We're commanded to grieve.

But we're commanded to grieve with hope, not with hopelessness. And so today we're not going to be talking about looking at someone you love who's passed or who might pass, but looking at your own death, thinking about your own mortality.

The other thing is, and I've had to say this to other groups because of the way people will view this, when Paul talks about that death is better by far, you need to understand that Paul is not suicidal.

[ 4 : 00 ] He is not in despair. He is not wanting to end his life. He is not wanting to put the Lord God to the test and throw himself off of a precipice because he can't stand life anymore.

That is not what this is. And one of the things that I just want to be sure to kind of go on the record as saying is that suicide is self-murder and is therefore a sin.

And so we don't need to think to ourselves that it is a proper or even a healthy way out. We are not the giver of life. God is. And so we lean and rest upon him to take us home at his time and his way. So I just want to encourage you to those things because it's easy to look at how difficult this life is and want to escape. And we don't need to be people who wish to escape. We need to be people who want to exalt Christ.

So with that being said, let me ask you, as you hear people talk in our culture, our country, this community, what have you, maybe it's something you've heard someone tell you personally or maybe it's something that you kind of hear repeated through the media or something like that.

[ 5 : 08 ] What are some of the different views about death that our culture seems to have that maybe they're not quite biblical? Well, I've known a lot of people that think everybody goes to heaven no matter what.

Okay. That's right. There's a huge, massive number of people in our culture that think that everybody who dies goes to heaven. That's true. They also think we're all God's children. Right. There is this idea of the universal fatherhood of God over all people. We're all God's children. And that too would be a false thing. What else? Death is final.

Death is final. Yeah, there's a lot of people that see it as like, that's just it. After that, there's nothing else. It's pretty hopeless. What else? Just more than one way to get to heaven.

More than one way to get to heaven. Do you ever hear somebody say, well, it's just natural?

[ 6 : 17 ] The death is natural? Yeah, there's a lot of people. The death is just sort of a natural consequence of life, right? That's unbiblical. That's unbiblical.

Let's just remember that, you know. Or born to die. Born to die. That's right. We weren't necessarily born to die in terms of what God's purposes were, but we certainly are under the curse.

And so it's like, hmm. We're born to pass through. To get to another place. How comfortable are you talking about your own death?

Would you say, on a scale of one to ten, ten being super comfortable, one being completely uncomfortable, what are you?

Okay. You're six? Ten? Okay, John. Awesome. I don't think about that. I'd say it's way up there.

[ 7 : 18 ] Way up there? Okay. I think that comes with age. It has for me. Sure. Sure. Yeah. I'm more comfortable with living. Than you want to swear. Yeah. Yeah.

It's not an easy subject. You know. It's like you might be comfortable about it, but you almost sometimes feel uncomfortable broaching it with those around you. Yes, ma'am.

Years ago, a couple that was in this church that were very close friends to my husband and I came to our house and sat us down and they said, you need to do this.

And we looked at them and we said, well, what are we supposed to do? You are to buy your burial insurance and get your affairs in order. And they were in their late 80s, chunky and fat.

Yeah. But chunky was like a dad to Rich. And Rich said, okay, we'll do it. Yeah.

[ 8 : 18 ] But thank goodness they came and they shared that with us because when the time came, all I had to do was walk into Brian's funeral home and say, our burial plan is already made.

Yeah. All we got to do is get the grave open. We're ready. We're ready. Yeah. Yeah. What a loving thing to do for one another, for your kids to be prepared and all those things.

So, well, so I want us then to look at a couple of about four different ideas and thoughts here in what Paul says.

The first one is just look at the aim, that the aim of our life and death is to exalt Christ. Verse 19 and 20 is sort of where I'm pulling this from. And let's just ask a couple of questions about the text.

Number one, what does Paul know will turn out for his deliverance, right? He says there in verse 19, for I know that this, this will turn out for my deliverance.

[ 9 : 22 ] What is the this? His salvation, his deliverance. Right. Exactly. He's imprisoned and he knows that he's going to be delivered from that and that's going to turn out for his deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the gospel.

Now, what's going to be the means by which, what's going to be the means by which that this deliverance happens? Prayer. Prayer and?

Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit, right? So we've got, so that's where you would see that it's through, right? So through prayers and provision and of course we know the provision of the spirit of Jesus

Christ.

Now let me just pause and give you a little, something completely off topic here. I would challenge you to go through and read both Old and New Testament, looking for every place that the spirit is mentioned.

And notice that there's a difference that happens through history that it's the spirit of the Lord and then becomes the spirit of Jesus Christ.

[10:32] And maybe why? Why is that? So we're not going to touch that today, but I just thought that I would throw that out there for you. So Paul expects and hopes that his deliverance will not be to his shame, but instead he hopes something else is going to happen because of his deliverance.

What is this thing he hopes will happen? What is the end result he's hoping will happen? That Christ would be exalted.

That's exactly right. So let me see if I can show you how that's working. So according to my earnest expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will be, even now, as always, exalted.

So whether life or death, right? So it doesn't matter which way, the end result needs to be Christ exalted. Now let's talk about this word exalted for a second. This word exalted at its root means the idea of causing something to be large.

Like so magnifying, if you will. There are two ways we can magnify things. We can take a microscope and look at something small and blow it up big. Or we can take a telescope and something huge and far away and bring it closer.

[11:53] The kind of exalting that we're talking about of Christ is that second thing. Our lives are supposed to be telescopes, whether by life or death, so that we can bring the exalted Christ, the glorious Christ, who's massive with splendor.

Or, you know, I'm just thinking about a planet, you know, when I remember when I was a kid and I looked through the telescope and saw the moon, you know, I mean, it looked like it was right there at the end of the telescope. It was just massive, right? So if you can imagine the massive splendor of the Lord Jesus Christ being brought close for people to see through your life.

You have an illness. You have suffering. You got a brand new grandchild. You got joy. All of that is to be a telescope through which other people see the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that's what it means to be exalted. And that should be our life aim is for him to be exalted. But one of the things that I think that's interesting, just by way of application, is Paul says that be exalted in my body.

In my body. Here is something that I find. It's really interesting how many Christians don't, they believe this, they know this, but they don't keep it in their heads for very long.

[13:14] When we die, right, right now this body is subject to sin, right? And the reason it's subject to the fall is because that's the way this world is.

Everything's been subjected to futility. That's why we grow old. That's why we have disease. That's why our knees hurt. That's why our eyes, that's why I have to wear glasses. You know, it's just, it's just that.

It's not because I was evil and God said, pfft, your eyeballs, you know. It's not that kind of a thing. It's just that we're under the curse, right? So one day I'm going to die and this body is going to lay in the ground.

And then one day when the Lord Jesus comes back, this body is going to be raised up. Glorified. No more glasses. Right? And be rejoined with my soul and live forever.

So what I'm saying is that the way we are, where we are corporeal, where we can touch, we can feel, this is going to be our eternal state. I mean, the body is important.

[14:17] What we do with our bodies today is vital and important. He wants to be exalted in his body, whether by life or by death. So this, I mean, this hits at everything.

Like, I mean, you can think about the easy stuff. Low-hanging fruit, right? Low-hanging fruit of somebody who's abusing their body with, you know, addictive substances or something like that. Really wreaking havoc on themselves.

But, you know, it's the same as overeating, overexercising, not taking care of yourself, not getting to the doctor when you should get to the doctor. I mean, there's all kinds of ways that we abuse the body.

And even outside of that, not getting enough rest or using our bodies for sin. I mean, we're supposed to exalt God through our bodies just as much as our minds and our souls. That's why good works are important. This is why, you know, serving other people is important. Because we're doing things with our bodies. So just don't ever think to yourself, there is a concept out there that, you know, what we do in the body doesn't matter.

[15:19] But in reality, what we do with our body does matter. So that's the first one. The second one, then, he talks about life. And let's go to this passage.

Can you all read that up there? I have a lot up there. I wasn't sure if that would, if you can't, you may have to look at your Bible. But here's what I want you to do.

He's going to talk about life. He's going to talk about death. So we're going to talk about life first. And he talks about the benefits of him living. Because that's the whole point, right? He's not sure if he's going to live or die.

And he's not sure which he wants, which we'll come to in a second. But he talks about the benefits of him staying on to the flesh. And then he talks about the benefits of him dying. So look at this passage.

And there are four benefits to him living. See if you can identify the four benefits of him living. What he thinks will be the four benefits for him. Joy in faith.

[16:22] Okay, what verse are you getting that from? End of 25. Oops, sorry. End of 25. Okay, convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue on for your progress and joy in the faith.

Okay? Yeah, I think that's one. Fruit from the Lord. Which verse are we in? 22, Rachel. 22. Okay. If I'm going, if I'm going to be living in the body, then it means that I need to be fruitful. Yep. Fruitful labor. Excellent. Two more. Now this is just how I count them.

You might not like the way I count them, so. What? It's, it's, I'm looking at verse 23, where he says, I'm torn between the two, the desire to depart and be with Christ.

Mm-hmm. Which is better by far. So it's that conflict between desiring to stay, to spread the gospel. But also, he's, he's, has that desire, you know, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

[17:36] Right. And it's that. Right. And we're going to talk. That's always going on. That's exactly right. That, that tension and that dilemma that he feels, we're going to talk about it more deeply in just a second. But coming off of what you're saying, right there at 24, you're talking about him staying on for, for being able to spread the gospel.

He, he says in 24, my being in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Right. So, I think that's sort of what you're talking about. My, my first one that I've got is in the first verse.

Is Christ. Is Christ. To live as Christ. Christ. Wow. Paul is saying that the purpose of living is Christ. The benefit of living is Christ. Christ, Christ, Christ. Fruitful labor for working for the discipleship of other people.

He wants to see them grow in their progress and joy in the faith. I mean, all of these things are, are great things. And I think about how, if, if Christ is not our life.

[18:44] The death can't be gained. Which we'll see in a second. But that's the way we as Christians are to be. Our life is to be Christ. And part of our life being Christ is helping others come to Christ.

That's why that whole progress and joy in the faith. And I want to talk about that for just a second. Because Paul uses the idea of progress in the faith. Not your faith.

Faith. So there's two ways that the Bible speaks about faith. One is the subjective experience that I have where I'm trusting Christ. I have faith in Christ.

And it is my faith. But there's another way the Bible talks about. And it is the faith. And I think I've mentioned to you before. So, kind of there's an old way of talking. I remember my grandmother, you know, she'd be sitting around the table after church.

And she'd be talking about somebody that came to the church that visited, you know, that day. And she would say, yeah, I think she belongs to the Methodist faith. You know? Or the Catholic faith.

[19:45] Or something like that. She understood and was using the word the faith as sort of a set of doctrine. Right? And a commitment to a particular understanding of the Bible. So, that's what he's talking about here.

Paul is saying that there is a body of commitment. A body of truth. A body of doctrine. That is the faith. And he wants the Philippians to make progress and have joy in all the truth of who God is.

Right? So, to live as Christ, part of that is wrapped up in helping other people make that progress and joy. And who Jesus is.

So, our primary purpose is not to give housing to the homeless, food to the hungry, clothing to the naked.

That's not our primary purpose. We need to do those things. But our primary purpose is to see people make progress and joy in who Christ is.

[ 20 : 59 ] Any organization on the face of the planet, even atheistic organizations, can give food to the hungry. But only the church of the Lord Jesus Christ can give the gospel to those that need it.

So, while we give food and shelter and clothing, we need to recognize that that is a means to an end and not an end in and of itself.

We give, we help, we share, we pour in so that we might help people make progress and joy in the faith. Okay, now let's take a look at death.

Alright? Let me get my writings off. So, what are the benefits of death? And my opinion, I kind of just see two that he mentions here.

See what you see. He says, I'm sorry, Jack, go ahead. He says, what should I choose?

[ 22 : 06 ] I really don't know. Mm-hmm. You know, he knows that if he dies, he's going to be in heaven with Jesus. Right. But if he stays on earth, he can continue his ministry to...

That's right. That's right. There's that dilemma. There's that dilemma. So, why is death so appealing to him? Because it'll be with Christ.

Okay, right. So, verse, that's verse 23. Be with Christ, for that is very much better. I have a translation, the English Standard Version, that says, which is better by far.

I love the way... Especially considering how much time he spent in prison. That's right. Okay, there's one more place that he says something about why death is better for him. Where does he say that?

You're proud of confidence. Jesus is proud of confidence in the... Okay, that's not in a verse up here. That's so. Yeah. Is it?

[ 23 : 05 ] Yeah, 26. Hey, Jack, that's up here. Don't say that it's not. I just can't tell you how my feelings are. Well, they should be because I'm a dork.

What can I say? Yeah, so I can't see what you're saying there. So, help me understand. This is not one of the ones that I saw. But what are you saying there? Well, to know that Jesus would be so proud of you in death.

Oh. Yeah, okay. I see what you're putting together there. Okay. Yeah. He knows he's going to be going for the Lord to be judged of what he did on this earth.

Right. Even though he's an apostle and he is preaching from prison and he has suffered for being an apostle of Christ.

He's still going to be judged. Right. At the seat of judgment. Right. And to know that Christ is with him. That's where the joy of the faith comes from to me, too. Sure. Sure.

[ 24 : 12 ] No, no, no. No, no. No. There's joy in knowing that Jesus is proud of me because I love him and I do what I can to keep learning.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. You know, so one of the things that I'm seeing here and as I'm hearing. So, when we do Bible study, one of the things we want to do in observation is we want to try to keep as much as possible.

This is really hard to do. Keep our thoughts on the verses in front of us. And here's why I'm saying this. Because the things you are saying are absolutely true. And they kind of connect with some of the things that are here.

But you have got so much understanding and learning of theology in your mind that that's sort of flooding in here. Because the answer to the question is super simple. Right.

So, what's the benefit of death? One is that it's very much better by far. And the other is that to die is gain. I mean, that's, and maybe my question is just so, you know, cuckoo crazy.

[ 25 : 11 ] But the point is, is that keep your observations to the text. That theology is good. We'll bring that in as we get to interpretation. Okay. Because why would, why would dying be gain?

Why being with Christ would be better by far? Why would that be the case? Well, because we know it's the end. Right. It's the end. We're with him. Now that judgment has passed. He has looked at our lives. We know that he is pleased because we're covered in his righteousness.

I mean, so all those things you're saying are a part of that. And I understand why you're, why you're saying that. But I, uh, just, just trying to keep us where we need to be there. So Paul has these two good things.

He compares death's gain to life's Christ. If you live this life and you're fixed upon Jesus Christ, Jesus is your every breath, your every thought, your every hope, your every desire.

You sense his presence. You know his comfort. You see his joy. Death is better. Death is better.

[ 26 : 17 ] I think about the number of times of suffering or difficulties that we've been through in our lives and the times of the Lord has been so sweet with his presence. You go to him in prayer. You have somebody come to you and pray with you.

You have a moment of fellowship with another believer where you're talking over the word of God. You feel the sweetness of that presence. Let's go back to Asbury revival, right? Stand there in the middle of that and sense the sweetness of the presence of the Lord and all of these people just rejoicing and singing to him.

And Paul would tell you death is better. Woo! That is good. That is good.

Death is better because we are with the Lord. That is the point of verse 23. He desires to depart and be with Christ. A Christian.

You know this. So. You brought up the verse from 2 Corinthians 5 that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. And often times the people ask the question. What happens right at death for a Christian?

[ 27 : 25 ] And we will go to that verse and we will quote that and talk about how that right at death a Christian is with the Lord. But I think this is another place that we can come to because as he is talking about death in verse 23.

He says having the desire to depart and be with Christ. In Paul's mind if he departs and dies he will be with Christ. So.

So there is no limbo. There is no anything else for you to go to before. If you die and you are in Christ. Then upon death you will be with him.

Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200. Go straight to Christ. Maybe that is a bad analogy. To be with Christ.

Is better than living. Now. Paul has a problem. Right. And we have talked about the problem a couple times already. The problem.

[ 28 : 24 ] Is that he is not sure which to choose. Right. He is hard pressed. If the Lord gave him a choice between. Staying on with the benefits of ministry for others.

Or being with Christ. He would be hard pressed to figure out. Which one. He would do. So the question is. What is his solution?

Where does he show you. That he has decided. Which way he is going. Or what is going to happen. To stay. For Jesus sake. That is right.

To stay. To stay. He says it right there in verse 25. Convinced of this. I know that. I will remain. And continue with you. For your progress. And joy.

In the faith. And here is what is interesting. When. There is a way to write in Greek. Where what I am writing right now. Is something that.

[ 29 : 19 ] Before I wrote this. It is already decided. It is already done. So Paul is not. Spontaneously. Emoting.

On a piece of paper. He is not going like. Oh death. Oh life. Oh death. What am I going to do? Any minute. Any minute. No. He loves me. He loves me not. You know. He is not sitting there.

Fluctuating. He is writing.

From a. From a. Decided. I know. That this is going to be the path. And that path is staying on. For your progress. In the gospel. I find that.

I find that interesting. And I think that. To me. I think that. We as Christians. Could take that example. And say to ourselves. We know that death is coming. We want to be ready for that.

But so long. As we draw breath. In this life. We want to have the attitude of. I need to live it. To be. For it. For the exalting of Christ. By helping others.

[ 30 : 16 ] Make progress. And joy. In the faith. In other words. If you have not. Gone on to glory. Yet. Then you have a job.

To do. I mean. No. You can't do some of the things. You used to do. But you have family. You got friends. You got church.

Fellow church members. You got neighbors. And the whole point. Is to help. Build. Their lives. So that they treasure Christ. The whole point.  
Like verse 24. Nevertheless. The remaining. The flesh. Is more needful. For you. That is right. It is. For your sake. More needful. For. For you.  
So. So I just. I just want to kind of close. With three. Three thoughts. And then I'll let you all have. Some. Some time to discuss. From all of this. This is. This is what I would. Say. Kind of walking out. [ 31 : 17 ] With something to do. Number one. You need to come to where. You're exalting. And treasuring Christ. Yourself. Everything in your life. Needs to be for. The exalting. And treasuring of Christ.

Number two. Helping others. Treasure Christ. Helping others. Exalt Christ. Helping them make that. Progress and joy. In the faith. And. And let me just give you. A couple of examples.  
So. My son lives in Colorado. Before that. He was living in Maryland. With. With his wife. And. And they've been. What. When. When. When they were married. 2019. 2019. 20.  
Yeah. 2019. December of 2019. Is when they were married. And. He and I talk. Every week. On the phone. And we have. In. That amount of time. Have walked through. Something. In the neighborhood. Of about. Six. Different.  
[ 32 : 14 ] Books. Or. Audio. Studies. Books. About. God. About. Who he is. What he wants. Books. About parenting.

Books. About. All kinds of things. And I'm not saying this. To. To. To say. Look at me. What I'm saying is. You may not be. Right here. With your kids. You may not be able. To be there. With them. Face to face. But it doesn't mean. You can't. Disciple. A kid. Or grandkid. In your life. The phone. Is a wonderful invention.  
And use it. You know. You want to call them anyway. Why not. Make the excuse. Of like. Hey. Let's read the bible together. Let's read through this book together. Let's.  
Let's listen to this. You know. You got a favorite preacher. That you want to listen to. Say. Listen. I want to send you a copy of the sermon. You listen to it. I'll listen to it. And we'll get together. And we'll discuss it. All of that.

[ 33 : 07 ] That helps you treasure Christ. And it helps you to. To build into their lives. So that they treasure Christ. As long as you're breathing. Your family is still your responsibility.

You have church family. You can look around inside your church family. And say. Is there someone. That maybe isn't growing as they should. And maybe I can meet with them once a week. And you may find yourself saying.

You know. I just can't get out. Or I can't meet them. Or I got other responsibilities. You can call them on the phone. In the same way. Think about neighbors. Think about. Other friends.

I mean there's just. I'm not trying to. Nail down a specific thing for you. I'm just trying to give you thoughts. Give you ideas. Things you can do. And then the final thing. That I would say. Is that this is the purpose.

Of the church. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. My goal. While I'm here. Is to point you away. From your thoughts. About what you should be. And point you to what scripture calls you to be.

[ 34 : 08 ] That's what a pastor does. Is a pastor. I mean I'm just. I'm just. I'm a player coach. Who's saying. Listen. God's word says this. We need to. Stop. Trying to think things.

Our way. And we need to let. The word of God. Rule our lives. And tell us. What to think. We are to be. Making disciples. And helping people. Treasure Christ.

And. My job. Is to help you. Help them. So. That's what the church is about. Any. Any questions. Thank you.