Philippians: The Book of Joy (Phil. 1:19-26)

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Date: 26 January 2025

Preacher: Jayson Turner

[0:00] All right, thank you, Brendan and team. You guys better watch out because I might speak with eloquence today.

It could happen. We are thankful for you to be here and to gather to begin our week seeking the Lord, drawing near to him. He's promised in his word if we would draw near, he would respond. Amen? And so we do that through song, we do that through the study of God's word. And if you're new with us, we are doing a series, an exposition through the book of Philippians.
And if you want to go ahead and turn open to Philippians chapter 1, we're going to be looking at verses 19 to 26 this morning. So let me pray, ask God's blessing on our time, and then see what he has for us today.
Father, we thank you for the opportunity to gather. Lord, you delight when your people gather. How precious it is when your people, they gather and walk in unity. And Lord, I pray that we would find ways to serve one another today in the way that we listen, the way that we encourage, perhaps the way that we weep.
[1:12] Maybe it's a prayer. Maybe it's a conversation. But Lord, we want to be reminded of the truthfulness of the gospel and the promises that we will even consider here this morning as Paul shares them with us.

So Lord, we commit our time to you. Would you give to each person here something from your word, your heart, that we could take with us and look something more like you, Jesus, this week. It's in your name we pray and all God's people said. Amen. You know, I find it personally a bit comical that I serve in a church with so many pilots and so many pilots in training.
It's a unique thing. I absolutely hate to fly. I think I've shared that before. It's unnatural. A 737 weighs about 150,000 pounds.
If you're in a 7, that's a 737, a 747 is close to a million pounds. Consider that. How does that work? Right? 500 miles an hour in the air.
[2:20] Like it's magic. I mean, Bernoulli tried to explain it, but it's magic. It's unnatural. And maybe I would like flying.

I don't like being a passenger. I feel really out of control. Maybe that's the issue. But it's interesting to me because I think people know that it's magical because when you land, everybody claps.
Like it shouldn't have happened, but we're all thrilled that we're alive. I take it to another level, though, because people are clapping. I'm hollering. I'm like, it's a whoop.
We're alive. Like, you know, it shouldn't be, but we're still here. It's interesting to me because when I fly, there's something sort of sanctifying because you have this like the veneer of like life and death. The veil thins a little bit while you're in the air in this magical space. And you land, you're like, and you come back a little more focused. For me, it's actually sanctifying.
[3:21] I become a better version of myself. It's like J Husband 2.0. And so I think the awareness actually of our mortality church is a healthy thing.

It focuses us. It recalibrates our affections, the trajectory of our lives. And so this morning, we're actually going to look at, I think, probably other than Jesus, there's no more focused individual in the Bible than the Apostle Paul.
He was keenly aware of his mortality. He says that in 2 Corinthians 11. He says, for far more imprisonments with countless beatings.
And often, here's what he says, he's often near death. But he was aware of his mortality, and I think it had a sanctifying effect on his life. Today, we're going to hear from him.
And really, I think this is the clearest summation of the Christian life that he's going to give us this morning. Or if you're a math-type individual, think of this as like, here's the equation of life.

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[4:29] The equation of joy. His clarity, his focus, I believe, are so desperately needed for God's people today, church.

Amen? So let's begin and consider here, beginning in verse 19. He writes, Yes, Paul, we've learned to this point, he's actually under home arrest.
He's there in Rome. And yet, even being in these circumstances, he's not off on a beach somewhere. He's not allowed to leave his residence that he's actually paying for.
And he says, hey, I'm going to rejoice. He says, yes. He begins, yes, and I will rejoice. So even in Paul's scarcity, he doesn't retreat inward to stew to think, oh, I'm just, I'm a victim.
He goes outward to bless. And we know because he wrote a number of epistles while he was there under house arrest. And I think there's a lesson for us here. That even in times of scarcity, and often when we draw close to the Lord in those moments, the Lord can multiply ministry in our lives.
[6:11] And I don't know if it's because we're close and we're depending, and all of a sudden the things that we share, there's a profoundness to them. And I've been walking with a dear friend this past week who has been his wife, like a second parent to me, Tom and Carla.

And he, Tom, has been walking with his wife who's been on hospice, a young 77, and just cancer, lung cancer has kind of taken over. And he's in a place of scarcity.
And Julie and myself went over, I think I shared last weekend. We were there for Saturday to spend some time with Carla. And I've been texting Tom, encouraging him. And he sent back, like, the most encouraging text I think I've, it's in the top three, like, words anybody's ever spoken to me.
Like, it was that encouraging. And here he is in this place of scarcity, ushering his wife towards glory. And yet, when we're in these places sometimes of being close to the Lord, depending on the Lord, we are just primed to be able to minister to people in unexpected ways.
And Paul is doing that. And he says he rejoices. Why? Why is he able to rejoice? Because for Paul, he's seeing the gospel proclaimed, and people are getting courageous because of what's going on in his life.
[7:33] He's still standing for Jesus, even though he's on home arrest. And so he's rejoicing. He's thrilled. That's why he rejoices. Because Jesus, the gospel is being proclaimed.

And I just, I love that. It's one of the reasons I drive Uber, is because I think if I can do this, and if I can talk to people about the gospel, it gives courage to other people.
Like, Jay's kind of ordinary. He's not eloquent. Thank you, Brendan. I appreciate that. And he's doing this. Maybe I can do this, too. And then it's like, so like, I want to do that.
Paul's providing that courage because he's like, I'm all in for God. I'll suffer for him, whatever. And then people, other believers see that, like, well, maybe we can do that, too. So I hope that what I do gives courage because I draw courage from others like Mark Lopez.
I don't know where he is. He pushes people around the hospital, and he talks Jesus to his coworkers into these folks, you know, on these stretchers as he's taking them around. It's like, that gives me courage to be bold, right?
[8:38] Or Dean, who goes to the salons in the greater, like, Spokane region, and I don't know what he does. He provides salon stuff. It's kind of a mystery. It's a world I don't understand.

But he goes, and it's like, he's a pastor in all these places where he gets to share the gospel. And there's broken people who come, and they see him, and they're like, man, he loves God, and they listen, and he's able to encourage them. Like, that gives me courage, right?
Or Craig up at Costco who's like, man, I'm in the break room. I'm going to open my Bible. And like, we draw courage from one other church. And Paul does that as he's like, I'm all in for God, even if I'm here in prison.
And I'm rejoicing because other people are getting courageous as well. Paul is a gospel guy. He's a Jesus man, and the gospel's spreading. Jesus is getting glory.
The church is growing. Encourage. So Paul is feeling good. What encourages you? When do you feel good?
[9:40] What is it that brings the happy to your soul, right? Is it when our sports teams, when they win?

I mean, in Seattle, we don't even make the playoffs. But, so I understand that. There's a little bit of joy when we actually win. Or as our investments are going up.
Oh, yeah, everything's right with the world. Because I'm making money. What is it for us?

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We get a bargain, yeah? We shop, and we're out thrifting, and oh, we feel good. Well, Paul, he's encouraged because people, they're meeting Jesus.
Paul's excited because people are being snatched out of hell, for real. And you see here in him, really, the priorities of his life.
[10:38] Paul, he's also encouraged because folks are actually praying for him. The Holy Spirit's at work, upholding him, ministering to him in this time.

He says that in verse 19. He says, For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance. Paul understands the value of prayer.
It's real. God has appointed prayer as a means that he works through. And so he's like, Man, people are praying for me. God's Spirit is at work in my life. Paul knows of the reality of the spiritual world.
It's not just fairytale stuff for him. He believes in that which happens in the unseen. And I would just say to us, church, this morning, there's far more going on than what we can even observe.
God's at work. The Spirit of God's at work. The Word of God is at work. There's a whole reality taking place. I love the scene in 2 Kings 6 where Elisha, he's there in Dotham, I believe, near Samaria, and there's a Syrian army approaching, and Elisha's servant is freaking out, like we're done.
[11:57] And Elisha says to him, Don't freak out, right? He says, Look to the hills. Like, greater is he that's with us and he's with, that is with them. And all of a sudden, the veil is like pulled back and there's like chariots and horses of fire just lining like the hillside.

He just has a little inside, like view of the spiritual reality that's at work. So there's more going on this morning, church, than just receiving God's principles for life.
There's far more going on. And I get it. The principles that were given in God's Word, they're exceptional. They're as good as they get. Here's one, Proverbs 22, 29.
Here's a principle for life. Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings. He will not stand before obscure men. That's a great principle. Be good at whatever you do, and the Lord will continue to grow your influence, your platform to do ministry.
You're good at your work. You're going to stand before kings, not obscure men. So whatever we put our hand to, let's excel, let's push, let's do it to the best of our ability. Well, there is a profound mystery related to what is going on in the unseen, and Paul just gives reference to it by saying, I hear your prayers.
[13:13] The Spirit of God is also at work here. And church, we believe that here. The leaders of the church believe that here. So whenever the elders gather, we always pray. Sometimes we pray, and it could be the majority of the meeting.

Well, you're not getting anything done. No, we're getting a lot done. Because the Lord has apportioned prayer as a means that he has chosen to sovereignly work through. Well, Paul believes these prayers, and the Holy Spirit is going to help in his deliverance.
So maybe the question we need to ask now is, what sort of deliverance is Paul thinking about? He says, it's going to help in my deliverance, right? Is he just thinking about merely getting himself out of home arrest?
He can get me out of prison. I think it's more than that. Because if you read in verse 20, he says, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be ashamed, but that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.
I think Paul's view of deliverance is far bigger than we think. He's not just talking about being released from jail here.
[14:25] He's talking about, I think, release from this life. But I believe he's talking about everything that leads up to that final event in his life. I think he wants to spend this lifetime representing Jesus well.

In fact, he says, hey, that I will not be ashamed, right? That Christ will be honored. Paul's like, I need your prayers that I would honor Jesus in this season.
I think that's deliverance for Paul. I need real help, the real help of your prayers. I need the real help of God's empowering spirit to see me through, that I would have nothing to be ashamed about.
And church, we need the real prayers of one another in this regard as well. Amen? Amen? We do. We live in a very compromised society.

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And it's very easy to see what's going on in culture and go, man, everybody else is compromised. Is it that big of a deal that I pursue the Lord with zeal, that I pursue after holiness, that I pursue after sobriety, that I pursue after ministry?
[15:39] We need the prayers of one another. But what we learn here is Paul's really greatest concern in life is how the name of Jesus is honored because of his life, which aligns so well with our mission statement as a church that God would be glorified, right?

Making disciples, right? That we would live to the glory of God. And that's Paul's heart. That's his aim. That's the summation of what life is about for Paul.
And now is where he clearly states it in a verse that we are very familiar with, but we're going to consider here this morning. Here's a summation of life for Paul. Look at it. Verses 21 to 24. He says, For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which shall I choose? I cannot tell. I am hard-pressed between the two. My desire is to depart to be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Now, summation of life for Paul. The equation of life for Paul.
[16:56] For to me, to live is Christ. To die is gain. Dr. Piper says it this way. To live is Jesus. To die is even more Jesus.

I think that's well stated. But I would say, if you don't like Jesus, this whole Christian thing becomes quite a drag. Because we're all about Jesus.
Jesus is not some curse word that we just throw out there. And every time it happens in my car, as I'm Ubering people around, and they decide to say Jesus Christ in whatever kind of tone or, you know, rhythm, I always follow it with, is the best.
So it doesn't matter if they say Jesus Christ, and then I'm just up in front, and I could not even be part of the conversations happening, but if they say Jesus, it's just not, I just, it's the best.
And it will often then transpire into, what do you mean? Like, and then it's like, well, that's a great question. I mean, Jesus is the best. Like, he would forgive a sinner, a sinner like me.
[18:01] Do you want to know, like, how bad? Like, I'm, I can excel in sin. I need a great savior. And Jesus was willing to do that for me? Yes, he's the best.

Who else in this world would die on your behalf? So it's a great opportunity to share the gospel. So, you know, you use whatever opportunities the Lord gives, but that's one that works all the time.
Is the best. You can do that. You hear it? Jesus Christ, he's the best. And then let's see what follows. But let's break this charter of the Christian life into a couple of its statements, its pieces here.
And first, we're going to consider this first part. Paul says this, to live is Jesus. To live is Christ. What exactly does this mean?
To live is Christ. For to me, to live is Christ. It means that in life, the number one priority, your priority, is to know Jesus deeply and to make him known.
[19:00] in whatever then, profession or gathering or hobby or thing that you happen to be a part of, you're still your number one priority.

Great. You're a doctor. Wonderful. But your priority, it's to know Christ. You're an athlete. Great. But it's still to know Christ. You're, you know, you're, you're a contractor.
You're a lawyer. You're a barista. A student. It doesn't matter. But still, the number one priority is to know Christ deeply and then to make him known.
And Paul's heart here is to know Jesus. In fact, he will say that a little sneak peek. I don't know if Scott's preaching this or me. I'm hoping he is because now I'm stealing his material.
But it says in Philippians 3.10, he says, hey, that I might know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death.
[19:57] Paul's like, I want to know Christ. I want to know him. I want to enjoy him. I think for Paul, he spent plenty of years not knowing Christ and so he savored the goodness of that relationship.

He knew how good it was. I think even for some of you who have maybe, you know, spent a season in rebellion away from the Lord. When you come back, you're like, man, I forgot.
It's so good. It's so good to know my sins are forgiven, to have that security, that eternal, that sense of security, to enjoy his presence, to not walk with a guilty conscience constantly looking over your shoulder, right?

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It's the righteous that are bold as a lion. I'm clean. My sins are forgiven. Man, that's joy for the soul. It reminds me of the hymn Come Thou Fount, written by Robert Robertson in the 18th century. Because he wrote about how good it is to know the Lord when he says, Come Thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace.
[21:06] Streams of mercy never ceasing call for songs of loudest praise. Robert Robertson at the age of 17 with some of his drinking buddies made way to go hear the preacher preach.

George Whitefield went to go hear a sermon. He was going there to make fun of Whitefield. George Whitefield probably is amongst the best preachers that has ever walked the planet. The guy could project to a crowd of 20, 30,000 without amplification.
The guy was spectacular. And he went to go make fun of Whitefield, but he heard the sermon. He was convicted. And three years later, he gave his life to Christ. He wrote this song, but Robert wandered then in his later years after fruitful ministry, walking close with Jesus.
And it's interesting because even in this song, the words are almost prophetic in the third stanza when he writes this. He says, Oh, to grace, how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be like the goodness like a fetter.
[22:19] What's a fetter? A fetter is a chain, a shackle around my foot, right? Bind my wandering heart to thee like shackle me, God, to you.

Keep me close. And then he writes this. Prone to wander. Lord, I feel it. And if I could, I'm not going to do it because I don't know how brave.
We're probably brave, but I'm still not going to do it. But I think if I were to say, Hey, any of you guys know this like that sense sometimes of being prone to wander, I think every hand would probably go up. And I love that Robinson was so honest here.
He says, You know what? Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart. Take and seal it. Seal it for the courts above. And there's actually a story about Robinson.
One day, he was in a stagecoach and he noticed a woman who was just dialed into a hymn book that she was kind of reading.
[23:17] And then during the resulting conversation, the lady then turned to Robinson and asked what he thought about the hymn that she was humming. Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And so, and he's cut to the core here. And he bursts into tears and he says to this gal, he says, Madam, I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago and I would give a thousand worlds if I had them to enjoy the feeling I had then.
And I think what Robinson's doing is just echoing Paul's heart here. To live is Christ. It's the goodness. It's to know that fellowship.
It's to know the presence of God. Oh, the presence of the good shepherd. That is enough. And so, Paul's saying, you know what? You want joy? It's found in Christ.
To live is Jesus. And maybe the question for us this morning is what is the joy equation for our lives? Can we echo what Paul says here to live is Jesus.
[24:25] Joy equals Jesus or is it joy equals Jesus plus? To live is, and you fill in the blank. I mean, many in this world, to live is to indulge the flesh.

Joy is to indulge the flesh. Joy is to sleep. I get it. We have some young parents and there's a certain level of, that's okay.
If you get a little sleep, that's good. To live is to fish. To live is to golf. To live is to eat great food. Or to live is to travel.
To live is to be entertained. That's a big one these days. I drove a guy that got in my car last night and he got in my car with this device that had, it had like multiple joysticks, buttons.
The thing was enormous. It looked like a, like a, I don't know, like a soundboard or something. I was like, what in the world? This guy's like, yeah, it's like, and you hook it up to your console and like, I'm like, what are you doing with this thing?
[25:31] It was ginormous. He's like, oh, we're going to go, we're going to game all night. Like, you're going to game all night? Is that what you do? He's like, yeah. And that was the summation of his life. He's like, I work and I game.

Like, okay. I was like, but I appreciated his honesty. And for some, like, it's to be entertained. To live is to be entertained. Entertainment's okay, but that's not the aim of our lives, church.
To live is to be respected. To live is to acquire creature comforts. To live is to wield power.

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What is it for you? And if you're unsure, I mean, if you really want to know, if you're married, ask your spouse.
But you're not allowed to call the pastor for three days because I want you to work it out and then we'll see at the end of the week. But Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, they don't want to hear from you. Okay? Or if you want to know, parents, ask your kids.
[26:38] They will tell you. They will tell you. And I would just say that was probably the biggest challenge I had when I was a pastor to teenagers in a different lifetime, really.

It was telling students to live for Christ and then going home and seeing parents that profess Christ, but no evidence. And here's the thing, kids know.
Kids know. Like, why should I be serious about God when my parents really aren't? Well, here's the secret that's not so secret. Joy is not found in all those things, even some of those good things that often absorb our lives.
Like, Solomon was very clear on this in Ecclesiastes at the end of the book where he's tried everything. He says, basically, in chapter 12, vanity of vanities, says the preacher. All is vanity.
He's tried it all. I've tried to, like, suck the maximum amount of joy out of all these different pursuits in life, and he's just saying they can't produce. And then, he says in verse 13 at the end, hey, the end of the matter.
[27:47] All has been heard, and this is what he says. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. to live as Christ.

Be connected to the Lord, to be connected to God. It's a life of ministry to others for God's glory.
And remember, that's what Paul's already told us in verse 1, chapter 1. I'm a servant of Christ. I'm a bond servant. In fact, the master's so good, I'm staying with him.
I will give up my freedom so that I can serve him all the days of my life. That's why Paul's so radical. That's why he's so focused. Because Jesus had been so good to him.
He was the worst prodigal. He was sanctioning the death of Stephen. That crowd, when they're stoning this young man, they're looking to Paul for approval.
[28:49] And that's just one instance of his violence. So church, to be used by God in the life of other people, it's the best.

It's the best. Jesus is the best. Being used by him is the best. It's joy-inducing. When you get to speak for the Lord. I drove two individuals about a week ago heading out.
They were completely stoned. I had the upper edge in eloquence at that moment. And I'm like, what are you guys doing? They're like, oh, we're heading out.
We're going to go and we're going to modify our Nerf guns tonight. These are adults. This is a whole group of people. It's a group I didn't even know exists. But they're like, oh, yeah, and we're going to get the maximum.
And then we're going to like, it's going to hurt when we shoot each other. I mean, I'm like, well, tell me about it. I'm learning stuff. And then it was interesting because I'm like, I'm not, I don't, they're stoned and they want to talk about Nerf guns.
[29:59] God, how are you going to bring the gospel into this? How am I going to talk about you and will they even remember? But the gentleman made a statement that he said, oh, yeah, we're upgrading these guns just like man evolves over time.

I was like, perfect. And I figured because they were stoned, stoned, I could just outright say, that's wrong actually, man's not evolving. And they just were like, and they're like, you're, because I was like, name one way that we've improved.
They couldn't. I mean, they were, I knew that they were stoned so I was like, I'm totally winning this. And they're just like, you're, you're right. And then, and then one of them's like, I think the Bible says something about this.
I didn't say the Bible, but I'm just, it was wonderful because I'm like, yeah. In fact, I said, we're designed like uniquely, like God has engineered us. We're not improving. Like, we, we have the image of God on us and he wants to relate with us and that Bible you referenced, I would suggest you start, start reading it.
It has a lot of good things to tell you. And it was just like, man, I didn't expect that. Thank you that I got to represent you, God. I don't know what the fruit will be. I don't know.
[31:14] So, for me, for to me to live is Christ. Every day, an opportunity to bless. Those with joy and those without joy.

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We get to minister to one another today. There's people here that need encouragement. They need you to pray for them. They need you to hear them. Maybe they need you to speak some truth for them. And just like I shared before, we need one another to borrow courage from.
Because I get fearful. Even when I'm talking to a couple folks that are totally not in their right mind, there's still an intimidation factor at work there.
Well, the second part of this summation for life, Paul says, you know what? To live is Christ. And then he says this. And it's kind of shocking because he says, hey, to die is gain.
To die is gain. I want to make a couple observations here. Okay? First, Paul here is just absolutely destroying this unbiblical doctrine of soul sleep.
[32:23] And maybe some of you have never heard of this doctrine. Maybe some of you have embraced this doctrine. This idea that when you die, you wait for Christ's return for the church, for the dead in Christ to then be conscious again.

And that's not biblical. And Paul even destroys it here when he says, you know what? To die is gain.
Death is not gain if when we die we aren't in God's presence, church. Death then becomes loss for a season.
But it's not described that way. Paul describes it as gain. When you die, you gain. Furthermore, the testimony of Scripture is that when you die, you don't move to unconsciousness.
Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5.8, we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. You're absent from the body, you're home with Jesus. If you're a believer and you're not with Jesus, then you're on planet Earth and there's ministry to be done.
[33:35] Jesus said what to the thief on the cross in Luke 23, 43, truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.

Today. Today. You're not going to a state of unconsciousness. When you die, you're going to be with me today. So, to die is gain.
Which leads then to the second question, what does Paul mean by gain? And perhaps a better word for us, maybe a word that we use in our vernacular today, think of it like this.
To die is an upgrade. Oh, I understand that. An upgrade. That's essentially what Paul's saying. Yeah. It's, it's moving from cattle class in the back of the plane up to business plan, up to business class, right?
[34:37] You can move, you can stretch. Not saying you should ride planes, it's magic, it's really dangerous. It's like, it's like moving from black and white to full spectrum color.

It's an upgrade. I'm not sure if we often believe this. You know, we grip this life so tightly.
Our stuff, our health, and yet Paul totally believes that death is an upgrade. We don't often think, how does he think, like, how can he promote this?
How can he preach this? How can he write this? Why does he believe this? Because for Paul, he had a preview. Do you realize that? He got what we call a sneak peek.
I have a daughter who's a photographer. She'll take some photos of a wedding and then she'll send a few to the people and when they get there they're like, oh, they're excited for the rest that are coming. It's a little sneak peek. Paul got that related to heaven because in 2 Corinthians 12 he writes about it four verses here, verses 1 to 4 he says, I must go on boasting though there is nothing to be granted by it.
[35:55] I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ. Who's he talking about? Himself. I know a man in Christ. Paul's talking about himself here. Who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven.

Three heavens? Yeah. There's heaven number one where the birds fly. There's heaven number two where the stars exist. And then there's heaven number three beyond wherever that happens to be.
So he's caught up to the third heaven. Whether in the body or out of the body I do not know. Paul's like, I don't know. Was this a vision? Was this a dream? Was it actually there? I don't know exactly. But it was real.
And I know that this man was caught up into check out the word. Paul's getting a sneak peek. And it says about heaven it's like going to the garage.
No, it's paradise. The word is paradise. This word could be translated park. It was a word used to talk about these beautiful parks of a Persian king.

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[37:03] It's paradise. Whether in the body or out of the body I do not know. God knows. And he heard things that he cannot be told which man may not utter.

He heard things that cannot be told which man cannot utter. The things that I saw the things that I heard they're even too wonderful to describe. That's what Paul's saying. It's too good. My words will fail.
If I try to share with you it will not be adequate to convey how wonderful it is. So for Paul he's like man I can say to die is an upgrade because I've had a preview.
And what I love about what he shares is it's a reminder to us that heaven's real. It's real church. This life is just an echo of the perfect.
This life is like if you're into philosophy I don't know why you'd be into philosophy. but we're trying to reform our philosophers but they still want to talk you know philosophy and it's like Plato's cave.
[38:12] If you know this analogy that existence is like being like chained in this cave staring at the wall of the cave the mouth of the cave is behind you and behind you the sun is shining or the fire is burning and you're seeing shadows of all this activity and you see the activity on the wall and you see the shadows dance and you're like oh that's reality man this is so good let's just keep looking at the wall at the reflection of what's actually happening outside and you think this is the real so much that you're even unwilling to turn around and look outside.

And I think what Paul is doing here is saying that's like this life compared to heaven this is like a shadow. In fact Lewis calls it what? We live in the what? The shadow lands the really real we're still awaiting that it's beautiful this is all we know and if you talk to Cole he'll then use this he loves this illustration of La Croix like if you've never had real pop and you're drinking La Croix and you think wow this is wonderful it's just the essence of something but it's like man we're having pop you're not if you want to have pop you talk to Scott he's like man Coca-Cola it's like the nectar from God himself to us you ever want to minister to your senior pastor just give him some Coca-Cola it's all it takes sorry Wendy I know you're trying to reform it but he will you give him a Coke he will drink it it's like La Croix?
Really? Have you not had Coke? I don't know where I'm going I'm so sorry it's interesting because Lewis C.S. Lewis develops this analogy Plato's cave analogy in his book The Great Divorce like heaven has nothing in common with hell they're divorced from one another and heaven itself is the real while we exist presently in the shadow lands and the book is like this sort of metaphor and this like analogy of folks being able to leave hell on a school bus and taking a field trip to heaven what's it like do we want it do we want to be here is it a good place and this is what Lewis writes they get to heaven and he writes at first of course my attention was caught by my fellow passengers who were still grouped about the neighborhood of the omnibus though beginning some of them to walk forward into the landscape paradise park the landscape with hesitating steps I gasped when I saw them now that they were in the light they were transparent fully transparent people in heaven they're they look transparent when they stood between me and it smudgy and imperfectly opaque when they stood in the shadow of some tree they were in fact ghosts man-shaped stains on the brightness of that air one could attend to them or ignore them at will as you do with the dirt on a window pane
I noticed that the grass this is a great description did not bend under their feet even the dew drops were not disturbed and Lewis paints this picture of heaven that it's so substantive it's so weighty that even the bodies we have now they couldn't even affect the topography the landscape like there's a substance to the grass itself that's the real that's the point that Lewis is trying to make here there's something weighty there's something far more real about heaven and I love even that the apostle Paul tells us the same thing 2nd Corinthians 5 1 when he describes our bodies he says in this life our bodies are like a tent when finally home described as a building which one has more gravity substance permanence I've seen some of you guys out at family camps I've seen those sorry excuses for tents like and some of us were starting to wear but the bodies in heaven they're like a building there's something far more marvelous and real about heaven it's this park like entrance that Lewis paints here and I love that because now all of a sudden heaven's not this ethereal thing that we're like oh it's weird you're on a cloud you're playing a harp no no heaven's like you going to a national park and being blown away by the majesty and it's like that's a better image of heaven than that other one that you had in your mind because according to scripture heaven is actually the restoration of our physical universe church it's a new heaven and a new earth a resurrected earth so instead of dwelling in an abstract otherworldly place this newly resurrected

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earth will be familiar to us church only much better you can read about some of that in revelation 21 22 you get some images there for those who have placed their faith in jesus alone for the forgiveness and their ultimate deliverance guess what you know what death is simply the voyage home to where we gain where it's an upgrade in fact paul says it's a voyage because he uses that language in verse 23 he says i'm hard pressed between the two my desire is to depart to be with christ which is far better my desire is to depart to depart this is a nautical term this this this word to depart is like unmooring a ship you see the metaphor paul's like that's what that death is like for the believer it's like you are taking a great voyage to jesus you're heading home you're raising anchor you're casting off and sailing home and i don't think we think about heaven this way enough that's why i think when we have these believers who use the imagination they're teaching us doctrine they're teaching us apologetics in a way that just sneaks in and it grabs our heart i love this image that paul says hey my desire is to take this voyage so i can be with christ in paradise this is a scene from lord of the rings this is tolkien frodo and gandalf casting off from the gray havens for valinor tolkien's image of heaven and pippin asks the question i didn't think it would end this way and gandalf says end no the journey doesn't end here death is just another path one that we must all take the gray rain curtain of this world rolls back and all turns to silver glass and then you see it pippin says what gandalf

what do i see gandalf says white shores and beyond a far green country under a swift sunrise and then pippin is like oh that that isn't so bad and gandalf is like no no it isn't you know paul is torn in his spirit church there's a conflict but if he had to choose if he got to choose he tells us what his choice would be he says my desire is to depart to be with christ for that's better but then he says but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account paul loves jesus he's been forgiven for everything and he shouldn't be but she says my grace is sufficient even for you paul so he wants to be with jesus heaven isn't just the the most brilliant beautiful enjoyable place to be with whether it's national parks it's this new jerusalem this engaging city replete with goodness it's also the place where god's presence will dwell forever it's the greatest upgrade we will ever experience in our lives period so to die for the believer is gain and yet what we hear from paul is he subordinates his desire for heaven for one reason church and he ends with this verses 25 and 26 he says convinced of this i know that i will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in christ jesus because of my coming to you again now paul believes that he's going to see the philippians again and he may have scripture silent on this we don't know we do have a little reference in in second timothy where he's now in his second imprisonment in the mamertine prison it's just like a it's like a cave in the ground it's dark it's horrible it's not it's not like this first kind of home arrest scenario but in that time he writes about his first imprisonment and he says in second timothy four he says hey i was rescued from the lion's mouth i think he's talking about he actually was delivered out of prison and perhaps he was able to then go to philippi minister to them scripture silent we don't know but paul understands from what he writes here that his life is to be given away for the glory of jesus and the joy of others and what we hear here is paul's even willing to give up the pleasures of heaven for a season in order to minister to more people church we don't have to make that decision it's not given to us we're here so we live we don't know our appointed time to die but we use this life like paul's heart to minister to people i'm here and i want to minister to more and so maybe the question for us today that we should leave with is man do we love people in this way excel in whatever you put your hand to in this life i think it's going to give you more platform to have conversations and and and encourage people i got to have lunch with a pastor from slovakia earlier in the week and we were talking about how we're kind of bivocational like i uber and i pastor so i use that to advance and have conversations and then he's like yeah i do the same thing i'm like oh what like a guy like me he's like yeah yeah i pastor and then i'm a doctor and i'm like okay we're kind of the same we use this life whatever skills whatever the lord has called us to to advance his kingdom to minister to people right

[49:08] would we be willing to give up the pleasures of heaven to minister to a few more or maybe it's a simpler question are we willing to give up the the comforts of our family room to minister to a few more people in this life to serve to love others well in this life i have a friend and i shared with you about carla tom and carla they're like second parents to our family and grandparents to our kids and i served a lot of years with carla in ministry she was she would hate that i'm talking about her right now she would absolutely hate it she was very shy but she served and she served and she served and she went to youth camps and she would go on mission trips and we've been all over this planet serving the lord together people inviting her into the home

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making meals serving her family she was she set the bar in terms of just being selfless serving a beautiful life beautiful life and she set a pace for for me as i think about her and i'm just thinking about her but i think her homecoming is good she went to be with the lord last night and i got the text this morning uh at one in the morning and she's with the lord and she knows like to die is game it's so much an upgrade church we get a very short life let's use it well let's try to minister to as many people to make much of the gospel because that's where the joy is church amen father we thank you that you tell the truth we know it says in titus 1 2 that you cannot lie and so we believe your word as paul writes to live is christ and so lord whatever we need to do today whether it's sin to repent of father whether it's a re organizing of some priorities yeah we want to be good at the things that we we put our hand to in this life but we really want to minister to people to see them encouraged to see them hear true words that there's a god who made them in his image that died on their behalf that they could have eternal life they could have full life now and death for them too could be gained lord we want to be about your business today this week this year thank you that you use ordinary people to accomplish your work it's in jesus name we pray amen

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