

All For The Gospel

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[0 : 01] Well, if you would, please open up your Bibles to the book of Philippians. The book of Philippians. We're continuing our series through the book of Philippians. If you don't have a Bible of your own, there should be a Bible somewhere nearby and a seat back in front of you.

But you'll want to have your Bible open. We want to hear from the Word of God this morning. Our passage is going to be starting at the second half of verse 18 all the way through the end of the chapter, verse 30.

So when you found that, Philippians 1, 18b through 30. When you found that, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word this morning. Paul says, Yes, and I will rejoice.

For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance. As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not at all be ashamed, but that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

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 I shall choose I cannot tell.

[1 : 21] I'm hard-pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. 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.

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

This is the word of God. Let's pray once more. Father, we ask that you would speak today through your word. Build your church through the preaching of your word. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

You may be seated. Amen. Well, as many of you know, Amanda's grandmother passed away a week ago Saturday, and so this week we were down in Georgia.

[2 : 48] I want to say thank you for the phone calls, text, cars, the many ways that you've encouraged us and supported us over the past week. But we were down in Georgia for her funeral this week, and I was given the opportunity to speak for a few minutes.

And as I thought and prepared and planned through what I wanted to say in God's providence, these words of Paul were just rattling in my mind. To live is Christ, to die is gain.

And I said, I acknowledge, you know, it is strange to talk like this. If you're not a believer, Christian funerals are strange events to attend. But death is never gain if you don't know Christ.

But at a Christian funeral, you might see sorrow and tears, of course. There's sadness. Death is a terrible enemy. And at the same time, there's mingled with it, there's joy.

There's hope. There's tears. And then there's laughter. There's grieving and there's rejoicing. We don't grieve as those who have no hope, but we grieve as those who know the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[4 : 01] We can rejoice in the death of a saint because we know that she was and she is in Christ. And so, yes, her passing is great loss for us, but we rejoice that for her to die is gain.

The lesson that we learn from Christian funerals and the lesson that we learn from our passage this morning in Philippians is one and the same, and it's this. This is the main idea for us this morning. It's that the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms the way we view life and death.

For the believer, for those who are in Christ, the gospel of Jesus Christ completely transforms the way that you view life and death.

And so let's see it in our passage this morning. I want to ask three questions of our passage this morning. This will be our outline if you're taking notes. First, I want to ask, well, how did the gospel transform Paul's view of death?

How did the gospel transform Paul's view of death? Look there with me starting in verse 19. Here in verses 19 through 26, we get a taste of Paul's singular devotion.

[5 : 12] You remember from the past couple weeks, Paul is a man of gospel ambition. He's got a one-track mind. He didn't care that he's in prison. He didn't care that selfish people are out there preaching the gospel trying to steal away his influence.

All Paul cares about is that the gospel is advanced. He wants Christ to be magnified whatever the cost to him personally. And here again, you remember, Paul's writing this letter from a prison cell.

And the possibility is very real for him that this might end in death for Paul. That possibility is on the table.

As he writes this letter, he does not know what the verdict's going to be. He might walk away and be set free. That's one option. Or he might very realistically be sentenced to death.

He doesn't know. He seems confident, verse 19, that it won't end in death. Verse 19, he says that he has the prayers of the saints in his corner.

[6 : 15] He has the Holy Spirit in his corner. He's confident, he says, that this will turn out for his deliverance. But there's the very real possibility that this will not end in immediate deliverance for Paul.

He may really die. This is on the table as far as he knows. The amazing thing is, look at verse 20. He doesn't seem to mind. He doesn't seem to mind.

He says, verse 20, he says, his main concern is that either way, life or death, Christ will be honored in my body. Christ will be honored. It is my eager expectation and hope, he says, that I will not be at all ashamed.

But that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life, option number one, or by death, option number two.

That's all he cares about. Paul does not care about Paul. We've seen this over the past couple weeks, haven't we? Paul's ambition is that the glory of God be magnified as he exalts the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 20] I think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. We preached through Daniel several months ago here. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. You remember the story. They're getting ready to be thrown into the fiery furnace.

And they're looking the king in the eye, King Nebuchadnezzar, and they say something similar to him, don't they? They say, our God will deliver us. But even if not, we will not bow down to your statue, O King Nebuchadnezzar.

Even if not. See, they share Paul's ambition. To live is Christ. To die is gain.

Their ambition is to honor the Lord in life or in death. And they share Paul's confidence that even death ends in deliverance for those who know the Lord.

This is the secret to Christian confidence. It's the secret to risk-taking for the sake of the gospel. The Christian cannot lose. There is deliverance and there is salvation at the end of the line for everyone who is in Christ.

[8 : 28] Even death itself means deliverance for those who are in Christ. If you're not a believer, this is so strange. The non-believing viewers don't know the gospel.

If you're not a believer, you need to know that there is one way and only one way that death could possibly be gained. If you are outside of Christ, death is not gain.

If you are outside of Christ, death is tremendous loss. There is one way, only one way that death can be gained. If by the grace of God, a sinner like me, a sinner like you, someone who has earned death because of our sin, someone who has earned separation from God because of our sin, if by the grace of God a sinner cries out to Christ in faith, and believes by faith that Christ Jesus has defeated sin and all of its consequences for me, Christ Jesus has risen from the grave and conquered the grave for me so that if I am united to him by faith, I can live forever with him.

That's the only way that death could possibly be gained. See, this gospel has transformed Paul's view of death. It's still terrible.

It still hurts. It still causes us to grieve. It's still a terrible enemy. But in Christ, it is a defeated enemy. In fact, he says it's a toss-up for him which one he'd prefer.

[10 : 04] Yet which shall I choose? I cannot tell. I'm hard-pressed between the two, he says in verse 23. I mean, can you imagine? Paul's not an old man. He's not at the end of a life well-lived, wishing to go home.

He has plenty of life ahead of him if the Lord would allow it. Yet he says, my deepest desire in my heart is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, he says.

I wonder, is this how you view death? When you think about dying, I know it's not a popular topic to talk about.

It's not warm and fuzzy. But the truth is, church, death is ahead of each one of us. When you think about the very real truth of death, I wonder if you view it as gain.

Paul's view of death has been transformed by the gospel. And not only this, second, the gospel has also transformed Paul's view of life. So my second question this morning is, how has the gospel transformed Paul's view of life?

[11 : 11] There's a whole other side of the equation here. And I want you to listen to this. I want you to understand this, okay? The gospel of Jesus Christ is not just about security in death.

The gospel is also about purpose in life. You hear that? I'll say it again. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not just meant to give you assurance that when you die, you will go to heaven.

As good and as glorious and as true as that is for you if you're in Christ, it's not just about eternal security and assurance of what comes after your life.

It's also meant to shape and define all of your life. You see that here, don't you? For Paul, look what he says in verse 21.

He says something absolutely stunning in verse 21. He says, For me to live is Christ. To die is gain.

[12 : 21] To live is Christ. This is new purpose for Paul. This is new life for Paul.

This is not just part of his life. This gospel of Jesus Christ has now transformed his entire life. For me to live is Christ. I've been crucified with Christ, he says in Galatians 2.

I've been crucified with Christ, therefore I no longer live, but Christ Jesus now lives in me. And the life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

To live is Christ for Paul. Paul says the old me that lived for self, that old me is dead. He is crucified with Christ. Now there's a new Paul here.

If anyone is in Christ, he is what? Help me. Help me. He's a new creation. The old is gone. Behold, the new has come. Christ is his life.

[13 : 27] I know I've shared this story with you before, but I'll never forget when I was in college. And the guy who disciplined me, mentored me, invested in me, he gave me an assignment to just make a pie chart of my life.

Just put all of my day, 24 hours a day, onto this pie chart and put it on a piece of paper and that represents my life and show him kind of how I spend my time. And so I tried to be as accurate as I could.

I had studying here. It's probably a small sliver. It's probably a small sliver. I had eating here, lunch, breakfast, lunch, dinner, snack. I had exercise here, sports here, hang out with friends here.

And over here, there's another little sliver of the pie chart. I had God. This was my time set aside for God. This is when I spent time with him. And I thought that I was doing pretty well. In fact, I thought that that was the point of the whole assignment was to see how much time you're giving to God and maybe try to wiggle out a little bit more time for God.

I thought that I was doing all right. He took one look at it and said, what in the world is this? And he said, no, no, no, you don't get it.

[14 : 35] All of your life is for God. He's not just one little sliver of the pie chart. Yes, spend time with the Lord.

Absolutely. Set aside time to spend with the Lord in Bible reading and in prayer and in personal devotion. But you need to understand, Jonathan, that lunch is for God too.

And sleep and rest is for God too. And recreation is for God too. And the time you spend with your friends, that's for God too. All of your life is now lived in worship of the living God.

He's not just part of your life. Christ is your life. To live is Christ. To die is gain.

You realize this is the complete reverse of the motto of the world. It's the complete 180, which is why the old self needs to be crucified with Christ.

[15 : 36] The motto of the world is to live is self to die is loss. Rule number one, don't die. That's rule number one, right?

Death is loss. Don't die. Self-preservation is the highest value of the flesh. There's no gain in death. Rule number two, while you're alive, you live for self.

Self-gratification is the second highest value in the non-believing mind. In fact, it might compete for first at times. Because the non-believer will turn a blind eye to the threat of death and the pursuit of pleasure.

So that one might be first. That's how the natural self views life. And maybe you saw the article about a guy named Brian Johnson. I saw this in Time Magazine.

It was titled, the article was titled, The Man Who Thinks He Can Live Forever. And I'll quote it for you. It said, Johnson, age 46, is a centimillionaire.

[16 : 38] I don't even know how much that is. Centimillionaire tech entrepreneur who has spent most of the last three years in pursuit of a singular goal. Don't die.

And during that time, he's spent more than \$4 million developing a life extension system called Blueprint. Blueprint, in which he outsources every decision involving his body to a team of doctors who use data to develop a strict health regimen to reduce what Johnson calls his biological age.

And that system includes downing 111 pills every single day. And wearing a baseball cap that shoots red light into his scalp, collecting his own stool samples and some other interesting strategies that I won't mention here.

Johnson says that the data compiled by his doctors suggests that Blueprint has so far given him the bones of a 30-year-old and the heart of a 37-year-old.

Johnson says he is reframing what it means to be human. I read that and I wanted to scream. No, he's not.

[17 : 45] This is the most normal way to live ever. It is not reframing what it means to be human to try and extend your life. Paul is reframing what it means to be human.

Paul is recovering what it means to truly be human. To be truly human isn't to live for yourself and try to prolong your life as long as you can. To be truly human as you were designed to be is to live every moment for the glory of God.

And the irony is, it looks a lot like death. You ask yourself, what does Paul's life look like as he's living for the glory of God?

It looks a lot like sacrifice. He's giving it away for the glory of God. He is, as he calls us to in Romans 12. He's offering himself up as a living sacrifice.

Offered up to God in worship. And more specifically, what does his life look like? More specifically, it looks like giving it away for the glory of God in the building up of the church.

[18 : 56] And I caught this vision in college. And again, I was growing in my love for Jesus. I was growing in my walk with the Lord.

I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. Because I didn't do it the right way where you're supposed to know that before you get to school. Right? I was figuring it out while I was there. But what I realized was, why not give my life to what Jesus gave his life to?

Why not seek to build what Jesus has committed to build? Why not align my desires and my time and my efforts with Jesus' desires and Jesus' time and Jesus' efforts?

And you ask yourself, what does Jesus really care about? What? Jesus gave himself up for the church. Loved the church.

Gave himself up for her that he might present her to himself without blemish. How? By washing her with the water of the word. If you want to give yourself to something that won't fail.

[20 : 05] If you want to devote yourself to a mission that's going to last forever. Well, Jesus said, I will build my what? You can say it. My church.

And the gates of hell will not prevail against it. I had a pastor who used to tell me, if you want to give your life to something that will last into eternity, give it to the glory of God in the building up of the local church.

This was Paul's aim. You see it. Verse 22. He says, if I'm going to live. If that option is the one that's before me. If I'm going to live. You know what that means for me?

That means fruitful labor for me. What kind of labor? Paul. Verse 24. To remain in the flesh is more necessary for you, church.

For you, Philippians. On your account. So I know that I will remain and continue with you all. Why? What's the point? What's the aim of his life? Two goals in particular that he has for the church.

[21 : 06] Verse 25. For your progress and your joy in the faith. You see it? Your progress and your joy in the faith. Paul is willing to give his life for the progress of the faith of the church.

He's willing to be imprisoned, to suffer, even to die for the sake of the joy of the church and the living God. You see, despite what you may have heard, Christianity is not a stagnant religion.

It's not just a decision that you make once and then it's over. You're in. You're good. Eternity is secure. When you put your faith in Christ and you become a Christian, your identity changes.

Your eternity changes. Your priority changes. And now, Paul says, your pursuits change. You are now, Paul says, so long as you live until Christ returns or you die and enter glory, you are now to pursue progress in the faith.

So I ask you, are you progressing? Are you pursuing? Are you soaking in the means of grace that God's given you to grow in the faith?

[22 : 27] Are you spending time with him in the word and in prayer? Is it your desire to help others to pursue progress in the faith? Christians are to pursue progress.

In the faith. But not only this, Christianity is also not a joyless religion. You know, if you hear this and you think, how much time do I have to spend in prayer? Really?

You mean I have to read the word? You mean I have to gather with all these crazy people and come to a place called church? What do I have to do to meet the bare minimum? If you hear this and you just think duty, right?

What I must do, you've missed it. You've missed it. Christianity is a religion of joy. And as we pursue progress in the Lord, as we grow in our relationship with him and with one another, as we grow up together, we are growing deeper and deeper and deeper into joy that will last into eternity.

We are called to give our life away for the pursuit of everlasting joy in Christ for ourselves and for one another, church.

[23 : 37] Is this how you view your life? Is this the framework that governs what you'll do when you wake up tomorrow?

How you'll go about your nine to five? What you do with your life? Your thoughts, your decisions, your hopes, your prayers? The gospel transforms the believer's view of life and of death.

But not only for Paul. Third question. How does Paul want the gospel to transform the church? The church. How did Paul want the gospel to impact specifically the Philippian church?

And then by extension, see we bet. How does the gospel transform us? Look there to verse 27 with me. He says, Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Now if you hear this call to give your life away for the glory of Christ and you say, Well, that's just apostle talk, right? That's pastor talk.

[24 : 41] That's not for me. That's not ordinary Christian talk, is it? That's not just for normal, ordinary Christians like me. Paul says, hold on. No, no, no, no, no. Let your life be worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How is this even possible? What does that even look like? I mean, no one can be worthy of the gospel. Here's the irony of being a Christian.

We've got to get this right. We've got to get this order right. Everything falls apart. Our status in the sight of God is based entirely on the finished work of Jesus Christ alone.

The status, the standard of God is perfection and none of us have ever possible. Nobody can meet that standard except for Christ alone. He alone has lived perfectly.

He alone has fulfilled the law's demands. He alone has earned eternal life. You and I cannot do it. By the grace of God alone, we receive eternal life by faith in Christ.

[25 : 46] All of us are carrying this big burden on our shoulders called sin. And when we try and carry that burden up the hill to get to God, that burden just gets heavier and heavier and heavier.

And we cannot carry it. Law says carry it up. The gospel says, come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest, Jesus says.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. To live in Christ, it means that you're now freed. That load is now light in Christ.

It's taking that load off of your shoulders. He's borne it on the cross in his flesh. Now you're freed not to live for yourself, but you're freed up to live for Christ who carried away your sin and your shame.

You're not a Christian because you're worthy. But in Christ, you are made worthy. And now you are called to live worthily. Everybody track with that?

[26 : 54] So let's close this morning by asking, what did that look like for the Philippians? What did that look like for the Philippians? And Paul has four applications for them from the gospel for the Philippian church.

Look there with me again to verse 27. He says, let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear that you are.

Four calls, four applications. Number one, I want to hear that you are unified. I want to hear that you are standing firm and one spirit with one mind.

I want you, church, to be united. Christ Jesus died to purchase unity. Not just vertically and individually, me united to God in Christ, although that's primary, but also horizontally, me and you and you and all of our crazy uncles and aunts and cousins in this big family of God.

See, we bae, do not let any seed of division come into this church. You all know that we have a church covenant as a church family.

[28 : 10] The members of this church, we commit to a church covenant. It's basically a description for us of what we understand it looks like to live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ together.

Do you remember what our first call is in that covenant? We will pursue unity. Christ has purchased it for us.

And Paul says, go after it. Pursue it. Not only this, second call. He says, live lives worthy of the gospel by striving together. Strive, first of all, don't be complacent.

Don't be lazy. Don't be stagnant. Pursue the Lord individually, but not just individually. Strive together, he says.

I want to see you striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. And that might mean calling up a member of the church and saying, come to lunch with me.

[29 : 10] Let me just pray for you. Let me hear how you're doing. Let me hear your struggles this week. Let me offer whatever wisdom I can for you. It may mean maybe you don't feel quite equipped to do this, but I promise you it's less intimidating than it sounds.

Maybe it'll mean let's study through the gospel of Mark together. Let's read through a book of the Bible together. Let's pick out a good Christian book and work through it together. Maybe that'll look like you opening up with another member of the church about your own personal sin.

I mean, how scary is that? And what you'll realize is, well, no sin has overtaken you. That's not common to man. We're all sinners. We're called to help one another.

Strive together, side by side, for the faith of the gospel. And when that happens, you can expect opposition will come. If the enemy can't divide a church from within, you know what plan B is?

He's going to bring opposition from without. Paul says, Philippians, see we bay, be bold and unafraid of the opposition that will come.

[30 : 21] Be bold and unafraid of the opposition that will come. When opponents of the gospel look and see a church that's standing together boldly and unafraid of attempts to silence them, unafraid of their threats.

It's a sign to them that maybe they're standing up against something that's bigger than this little church out in all and all. But also it's a sign for you, church, that it's evidence of your salvation.

A bold, unified church on the move is a formidable thing. And when that opposition comes, he gives one final call here in verse 29. It's to endure suffering for the sake of Christ.

Endure suffering for the sake of Christ. Verse 29, he says, It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in Him, but also suffer for His sake.

Engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. Now Paul knew all about some conflict, didn't he? And they saw it when he was there in Philippi.

[31 : 31] They're hearing about it now that he's there in prison. He's suffering for the cause of Christ. And he says, You Philippians, you look at me. You look at my chains.

You look at the bruises and the insults that I've heard and the suffering that I've endured. Look at my opposition. Look at my suffering. And realize that this has also been granted to you.

Congratulations! It's been granted to you that you should not only believe in Him. That's what we all want to capitalize on, right? But also to suffer for His sake.

It's a double blessing. Take heart. Just as Christ Jesus suffered and then entered into glory, never to die again.

So all who are in Him will join Him in suffering now. But on the other side, church, is glory to come. If you have died with Him, you also will live with Him.

[32 : 33] The gospel transforms life and death for the believer in Christ. You know, if you're hearing this and you're not a believer.

Or maybe you're not sure if you're thinking about these things. If you're hearing these words and you're not even sure what this means for you.

Hear this call this morning. Repent and believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Repent and believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Say with Paul, to live is no longer self.

To live is Christ. And receive Paul's hope that death is no longer an enemy to be feared. But death is gain because on the other side is my Savior who lived and died for me.

To live is Christ. To die is gain. You know, some of you asked me last week. I shared the story of John Bunyan. Of his imprisonment for Christ.

[33 : 33] And some of you asked me how he died. And I had to look that up this week. After spending 12 years, over 12 years in prison. Spending that time advancing the gospel through his writing.

John Bunyan eventually died in 1688. On a preaching trip. He got sick. He was doing what he was called to do. He's giving his life away for the glory of God.

And in the building up of the church. He lived for something that will last into eternity. And now his body is buried in what's called Bunhill Fields. I'd never heard of Bunhill Fields before this week.

But apparently, this is where they buried nonconformists of the 1600s. These are those who did not conform to the Church of England. It's a Puritan burial ground. And so, there's names that you might recognize buried there.

Isaac Watts is there. And John Owen is there. Susanna Wesley, the mother of John. And Charles Wesley is there. And John Bunyan is there. I'd love to be there on Resurrection Day.

[34 : 36] Bunyan, as we mentioned last week, is well known for his book, Pilgrim's Progress. It's about a man who's journeying to what they call the Celestial City.

This man named Christian going to the Celestial City. And if you've ever read it, you know that as Christian begins his journey. This is at the beginning of the book. He has this heavy burden on his back.

And eventually, he comes to the place called Deliverance. He comes to the cross of Christ. And that burden that's weighed him down all his life, that burden is released.

And then the journey really begins. And he seeks to live his life to the honor of Christ on his way to glory. In 1862, a statue was installed over John Bunyan's grave.

And it looks almost like a big marble table. You can look this up. And on top of the statue is a man lying down as if dead. I think it's meant to represent John Bunyan.

[35 : 36] And in his hand is a book. And on either side of the statue are two scenes. One side is a man carrying a heavy burden on his back.

He's weighed down. He's hunched over. He's burdened by his sin. But on the other side, that man is holding on with both hands to the cross of Christ.

With a burden tossed away to the side. That's a picture of the freedom of the Christian. No guilt in life.

No fear in death. This is the power of Christ in me. John Bunyan knew what it meant to live for the glory of Christ. Free of the burden of sin and shame.

And he knew like Paul, to die in the Lord is great gain. Let's pray. Father, we pray that our lives would be lived worthy of the gospel of Christ.

[36 : 41] Father, we pray that if there's any here who are still carrying that burden of sin and shame, Lord, would you relieve them of that burden by showing them the cross of Christ for them.

And Lord, now we ask that as believers, you would allow us to live in the freedom that Christ has purchased for us. Father, that we would no longer live for self, but that we would live for the glory of God and the gospel of Christ.

That for us, to live would be Christ and to die would be gain. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. when action is given to some of our souls in our lives u slash of Zentrosoft of the world but ourgehen of God.