

Contagious Joy

Part 4 – Living for... What?

Philippians 1:21-30

March 22, 2009

When you take a hard look at your life, what are you really living for? What are your true priorities? We can say with our mouth that this or that is really important to us, but in reality it is empty chatter. What we really are living for is reflected in the choices we make and how we live our lives. In our text today we see the secrets to really living a “Godward” life!

New Christians go through these three stages:

1. They become sons or daughters in the family (the **fellowship** of the Gospel) 1:1-11
2. They become servants (the **furtherance** of the Gospel) 1:12-26
3. They become soldiers (the **faith** of the Gospel) 1:27-30
Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament* (372). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

Proposition: What does living for Christ really involve?

I. Living life with a heavenly **perspective** not an earthly perspective (v. 21-24)

A. **What are you living for?** Is it Christ? Do you have the right priorities?

1. **For me to live...** v. 21

- No verb
- *Rom.14:8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*
- *“I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim. 4:6-7)*

- **Gain:** (kerdos). Any gain or profit, interest on money; In N.T. only here, Phil. 3:7; Titus 1:11.
 - **Flesh:** refers to physical body, not our fallen state because of sin. (v.22a)
2. **Fruitful labor:** 3 kinds of fruit... This fruit is God's fruit! (v. 22b)
- **Attitudinal:** Spiritual qualities and attitudes: Gal. 5
 - **Action:** Righteous behavior or actions: *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. Heb. 13:15*
 - **Abiding:** New converts
⁵also greet the church that is in their house Greet Epaeetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. Rom. 16:5
- I don't know which to choose:* (v. 22) He was unclear because God wasn't clear to him. Two equally compelling choices!
3. **Hard-pressed.** (v. 23) *Sunechō* literally means "to hold together."
- It was often used of being hemmed in from both sides, as when walking through a narrow gorge. The Gr. word pictures a traveler on a narrow path, a rock wall on either side allowing him to go only straight ahead.
 - Luke used the word to describe the multitude in Galilee who were "pressing in on" Jesus (Luke 8:45).
4. **Depart:** (*analuō*) "to unloose" Political term (v. 23)
- Like a boat's being untied from its moorings when it is ready to set sail; lifting the anchor.
 - Military word "to take down one's tent and be off" as in breaking camp. A pilgrim's journey. (II Cor. 5:1)
 - Departure of a guest from a wedding feast (Luke 12:36).

- Described the setting free of a prisoner. (Acts 16:26)
- God’s people will be freed at the return of Christ (Rom. 8:18–23)
- Word used by the farmers; it meant “to unyoke the oxen.” Paul had taken Christ’s yoke, which is an easy yoke to bear (Matt. 11:28–30).
- The word described the dissolution of a chemical. One could take a tablet and drop into water so it would dissolve. In its dissolving it would disappear but would not be destroyed. Its form is only changed from a solid to a liquid. **When a Christian dies, he disappears but he or she is not destroyed. The form of life changes from a physical state to a spiritual state. We die, but we don’t die. We just change the conditions of life.**

B. Soul Sleep? (v. 23)

1. Philippians 1:23 refutes the doctrine of soul sleep, the teaching that the dead exist in a state of unconsciousness until their resurrection. When believers die, they immediately **depart to be with Christ**.
 - The penitent thief on the cross, to whom Jesus said, *“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise”* (Luke 23:43; cf. 2 Cor. 5:8).
 - Moses and Elijah’s appearance at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3)
 - The fully conscious martyred Tribulation believers (Rev. 6:9–11)
 - The New Testament uses sleep as a metaphor for death. MacArthur, J. (2001). *Philippians* (79). Chicago: Moody Press.
2. *²⁴yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.* Paul would gladly postpone his heavenly blessings for the sake of continuing to serve his earthly brethren!

C. What are the wrong priorities? For me to live is _____. The ads on television tell us what the values are in our society for they tell us what we want to hear. Based on advertising most Americans would fill in the blank in one of 4 ways:

1. "For me to live is **possessions**."

- Get, get, get. We buy things we don't need, with money we don't have to impress people we don't even like. Working to keep up with the Jones.

2. "For me to live is **pleasure**."

- If it feels good, do it. Anything that makes me feel pleasure... Epicurean philosophy... no pain. Pleasure doesn't last.
- Helen Keller: True happiness is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.
- There is so much unhappiness in our culture, so many discouraged and depressed people is because in our society there is a total preoccupation with self. What's best for me? What will make me happy? What is the best thing for me? The ME generation!

3. "For me to live is **power** (or position, prestige)."

- We dress for success and we drive to impress. Image is everything. We angle for the right position in our companies and want the accompanying prestige that goes with it!

4. "For me to live is **popularity**."

- For many teenagers it is popularity. They'll do anything they can to fit into the peer group even if it means to lower their standards. You can be the most popular person on your campus, come back two years later and no one remembers you. One minute you're the hero the next minute you're a zero.

5. Transition: The problem with possessions, pleasure, power and popularity is that they don't last. Not a lifetime, much less an eternity. There isn't ultimate fulfillment. Choose the right priorities ...

II. Placing our **confidence** in God not our own abilities v. 25-26

A. His Confidence

1. Was in Christ. As Paul lived on fruitfully, their joy and confidence would overflow because of Christ's working in him, not because of anything he himself did by his own ability. What is your measuring tool for success?
2. Phil. 3:1-8
3. *So that*: indicates a purpose... v. 26
 - When you learn to have a greater purpose in your life than just yourself, you will have joy more than you can handle. There is no such thing as problem free living.
 - When you base your life on the kinds of values that are going to last, then problems just aren't as significant. So what that things haven't worked out as I've planned. God has a purpose that is bigger than my problems.
4. "*Proud confidence*" (NASB, Gr. *kauchema*) means ground for joy. In the Greek text, the phrase *in Christ Jesus* precedes the phrase *in me*, and that is the order Paul must have had in mind, the idea being: "*in order that your proud confidence may abound in Christ Jesus, as He is seen in me.*"
 - It is not about him. He even says that in chapter 3 when he lists a rather impressive set of credentials.
 - We get the order mixed up! Who is first?

B. His Coming *through my coming to you again* v. 26

1. "**Coming**" (Gr. *parousia*) is the same word Paul used to describe the Lord's return (1 Thess. 3:13).
2. "In Classical Greek it referred to the pomp and pageantry that accompanied the arrival of a king or governor in a city. By using this special word Paul may indicate that he expects to receive a 'king's welcome' from the Philippians when he comes to their town." F. W. Beare, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*
3. Statements in the Pastoral Epistles as well as in the writings of some of the early church fathers indicate that Nero released Paul from his first Roman imprisonment in A.D. 62. The apostle resumed his missionary labors and returned to Macedonia and probably to Philippi. However, the Romans arrested him again, imprisoned him in Rome a second time, and then executed him as a martyr there in A.D. 68.

III. **Conducting** our lives with spiritual integrity v. 27-30

Conduct yourselves:

- *Politeuomai* (conduct) is the main verb in verses 27–30, which in the Greek is a single sentence. Only twice in N.T., here and Acts 23:1. It comes from the root word *polis* (city), which in earlier times usually referred to the city-states to which inhabitants gave their primary allegiance.
- Philippi had the distinction of being a Roman colony, a highly privileged status that gave its inhabitants many of the rights enjoyed by citizens of Rome itself. Such colonies considered themselves “little Romes” and took great pride in that association. They gave unqualified allegiance to Rome and to the emperor, adopted Roman dress and Roman names, and spoke Latin, the official language of Rome. Roman society, like Greek society before it, was highly community-conscious.

- Paul was proud of his own possession of this right. This word was especially appropriate to use in a letter to people who took great pride in their Roman citizenship (cf. Acts 16:12, 20-21).
- The individual was subordinate to the state, and a person's skills, talents, energy, and endeavors were devoted first of all to the interests of society at large. It was not a coerced subjection, as in modern totalitarian states, but was based on a willing sense of interdependence in which citizens took great pride. A responsible citizen was careful not to do anything that would bring disrepute on his *polis*. And he tried always to be considered an honorable citizen, so that he would never be removed from the list of citizens.
- The verb carries the basic meaning of being a citizen. But, by implication, it means being a *good* citizen, one whose **conduct** brings honor to the political body to whom one belongs. *Act like a citizen of heaven! Behave!*
- The Philippian Christians, however, were also citizens of a more important kingdom, a heavenly one. As such they needed to stand firm in one spirit. *Philippi was a colony of Rome in Macedonia, and the church was a colony of heaven in Philippi.*

in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ

- Is to live a life consistent with God's Word. That includes living a life that corresponds to the truth Christians profess to believe, preach, teach, and defend. In other words, it means living with integrity in every facet of life.
- When people who are far from God look at the church and do not see holiness, purity, and virtue, there appears to be no reason to believe the gospel it proclaims.

- Someone once asked Gandhi, “What is the greatest hindrance to Christian missions in India?” Gandhi replied, “Christians.” Even in the midst of battle, we must behave like Christians.

How? How do we live such a life?

A. Standing firm displays Consistency (v. 27a)

1. **Standing firm** translates the single Greek verb *stēkō*
 - Steadfastly holding one’s ground regardless of danger or opposition.
 - Conveys the idea of firmness or steadfastness, or unflinching courage like that possessed by soldiers who determinedly refuse to leave their posts irrespective of how severely the battle rages, who defended his position at all costs, even to the point of sacrificing his life.
 - “*Stand firm*” describes a Roman military formation in which the soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder and back to back with their shields up and their spears outward. It was the strongest possible defensive position.
 - Figuratively, it refers to holding fast to a belief, conviction, or principle without compromise, regardless of personal cost. Being firmly fixed in matters of biblical truth and holy living is included in this injunction. MacArthur, J. (2001). *Philippians* (86). Chicago: Moody Press.
 - Paul’s fear was being disqualified.
2. They were to stand firm in the spirit: meaning Holy Spirit
3. One *mind*: speaks of unity, harmony and interdependence.
4. Remember: We don’t stand alone!

B. Striving together describes Cooperation! (v. 27b-28)

1. **Sunathleō (striving together)** is a compound Greek word which means to compete in a contest, especially in a sport such as wrestling. It is the term from which the English words *athlete* and *athletics* are derived. He goes from politics to athletics!
 - Like being on a sports team together: Example... Coaching baseball state championship
 - The idea of contending against is implied, but only in the sense that the church must also be **striving together** against sin and the common enemy, Satan and his demon hosts.
2. **Alarmed:** “Not startled in anything.” from (*ptoeō* terror).
 - The metaphor a startled, timid horse who bolted, often because of something perfectly harmless, and threw his rider.
 - The verb 'to be intimidated' (*ptyresthai*) is extremely rare, found nowhere else in the entire Greek Bible.
 - Christians in Paul’s day, including those in Philippi, often had good human reason to be terrified of possible beatings, imprisonment, and even execution by **opponents** of the gospel.
 - Others faced somewhat less serious **opponents**: family members, friends, and neighbors who ridiculed and disowned them. But however serious their conflict might be, they were not to be **alarmed**, because the very fact that they were being attacked because of the gospel was proof that their opponents were headed for **destruction**. MacArthur, J. (2001). *Philippians* (93). Chicago: Moody Press.
 - Evangelist E. Stanley Jones - the first Christians didn’t wring their hands in despair and say, “Look what the world has come to.” Instead with they declared, “Look what has come to the world.” It’s

never been easy to be a Christian. It wasn't then, it isn't now.

- Application: John 16:33 in this world you will have tribulation
3. *Sign*: Evident token (*endeixis*). Old word for proof. See II Cor. 8:24. It proved 2 things...
- 1. Enemies of God are under His judgment. It is describing eternal punishment not annihilation. II Thes. 4:1-8, see Psalm 73 too...
 - 2. **sign** gives evidence of is the **salvation** of those who suffer hostility from the **opponents** of the gospel. Persecution for the sake of Christ proves believers belong to Him. Don't be discouraged if you are persecuted. It is sign that you are saved!
 - When people oppose you for your Christian testimony, you may be sure of two things: 1) You are going to heaven, and 2) They are going to hell.
4. Remember: We are on the winning side! Cooperation

C. **uffering for Christ develops Confidence** v. 29-30

1. **The Command**: v. 29 We have the privilege of belief and to suffer for Him. Suffering is part of the Christian experience, but most of us want nothing to do with it! It a privilege! Paul isn't asking them to do anything he hadn't already experienced. Back in the 1800's George MacDonald wrote: "No words can express how much our world 'owes' to sorrow. Most of the Psalms were conceived in a wilderness. Most of the New Testament was written in a prison. The greatest words of God's Scriptures have all passed through great trials. The greatest prophets have "learned in suffering what they wrote in their books." So take comfort afflicted Christian! When our God is about to make use of a person, He allows them to go through a crucible of fire."

- *II Tim. 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*
- *Acts 5:41 worthy to suffer*
- *Matt. 10:22 You will be hated by all because of My name,*
- *Mark 8:34 If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*
- *Rom. 5:3 Exult in tribulation*
- *I Peter 1:6-8 Tested by fire*
- *I Thes. 3:3 We were destined to suffer*

2. **The Conflict** v. 30

- (*agōna*). Athletic or gladiatorial contest as in I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 4:7.
- **The conflict which you saw in me** refers to the hostile opposition and persecution he and Silas faced when they were imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:16–40).
- **And now hear to be in me** refers, of course, to the apostle’s present imprisonment in Rome, which he has already mentioned (v. 12–18).
- The telescope brings distant things closer, and the microscope makes tiny things look big. To the unbeliever, Jesus is not very big. Other people and other things are far more important. But as the unbeliever watches the Christian go through a crisis experience, he ought to be able to see how big Jesus Christ really is. The believer’s body is a “lens” that makes a “little Christ” look very big, and a “distant Christ” come very close. Wiersbe, (1996.). *The Bible exposition commentary*. ",Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

3. Adoniram Judson was the first overseas missionary sent out from America. In the early nineteenth century, he and his first wife went to India and, a short while later, to

Burma, where he labored for nearly four decades. After fourteen years, he had a handful of converts and had managed to write a Burmese grammar. During that time he suffered a horrible imprisonment for a year and a half and lost his wife and children to disease. Like Paul, he longed to be with the Lord, but, also like the apostle, he considered his work for Christ to be infinitely more important than his personal longings. He therefore prayed that God would allow him to live long enough to translate the entire Bible into Burmese and to establish a church there of at least one hundred believers. The Lord granted that request and also allowed him to compile Burmese-English and English-Burmese dictionaries, which became invaluable to the Christian workers, both foreign and Burmese, who followed him. He wrote, “If I had not felt certain that every trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy, I could not have survived my accumulated sufferings.” MacArthur, J. (2001). *Philippians* (77). Chicago: Moody Press.

D. Reminder: How do we live by God’s perspective?

1. **Jesus**: Put Christ first...chapter 1
2. **Others**: Put others second. (2:1-2)
3. **You**. Paul put himself last! (2:3-4)

Table Talk

1. What was Paul's attitude toward life and death? (v. 21)
2. What do you really live for? How do possessions, pleasure, power, prestige and popularity compete for your attention?
3. What is your purpose or life mission?
4. Between what two things was Paul hard pressed? (v. 23-24)
5. In what ways do we put our confidence in things other than Christ? (v. 26)
6. What sort of conduct did Paul consider worthy of the gospel of Christ? (v. 27)
7. What in "our culture" alarms you? (v. 28)
8. What had been granted to the Philippians on behalf of Christ? (v. 29)
9. Why is suffering part of God's plan for us? (v. 29-30)

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