

[trustfully ever after]

:: philippians 1.19-21 ::

Our text this morning is Philippians 1.19-21.

Philippians 1.19-21 - For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

The thing that makes me marvel the most about this book is Paul's attitude in the face of persecution and death. I mean, I am just blown away at his level of calm and confidence at this point in his life.

Other than being in prison, other than looking forward to execution at the hands of the Caesar, other than the spiritual and emotional weight that the various churches he was involved with, other than his physical ailments and the various groups who were slandering him, other than his friends abandoning him, other than all of those things that we read about from his letters or in the book of Acts, he was left wondering what was going to happen next in his life. Yet, we continually find joy in his speech. We continually find that confidence and consistency and satisfaction in Christ.

Of course, right? He's the Apostle Paul. We sort of elevate him to the status of mutant-Christian. He's a platinum disciple. Management material.

But this is the guy that throughout this letter is saying, "***This is the Christian life!*** This is who you are." This is the same guy who said, "follow me as I follow Christ" in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

Now, each of us will have a difference scope of ministry as the Lord divvies out assignments to us. Some are given a larger scope of ministry than others from the human perspective, but whether you're an ambassador to Brazil or an ambassador to the tiny island of Malta, the job is the same. The purpose is the same.

So, when we compare our lives and our thinking to what we see from the Apostle Paul, the hope is that **WE** find that confidence in Christ and that abandon to His will within ourselves.

What it comes down to is our answer to a very important question: My life is all about **what?**

The Philippians were worried about Paul. They knew what was going on and it concerned them. But in this letter, Paul answered all of their questions and concerns and worries with the simple and famous phrase: "For me, to live is Christ."

On a casual reading I might think, "Yeah, yeah Paul, I'm a Christian too, but what about this or what about that..." And Paul comes back and says, "No, you don't understand. This is it. This is the end all. My life isn't about business. It's not about power. It's not about money. It's not about pleasure. My life is Christ. What He says. What He wants. What He does. That's it. Nothing else comes in front of that."

Because of that mindset, God was not only able to use Paul to save people from hell, but this man could also stare life in the face without fear.

So how do we get there? Let's try to unlock some of this.

First, he writes:

Philippians 1.19 - For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

First and foremost, we must grab onto the fact that our lives have to be fueled by the Holy Spirit. Paul points this out and says that his deliverance, his salvation was by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

As Christians, life cannot be lived effectively without the filling and guiding and supply of the Holy Spirit. It just can't. We try to do it all the time. We're schemers. We're individualists. We're proud. But, like we saw in the study of David on Sunday, when we leave the presence of the Spirit, we immediately encounter defeat in life.

I know that may sound sensational, but this is the truth. When you start to realize that as a Christian everything hinges on God's provision in your life, then we couldn't possibly over-state the need we have for the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Your marriage is contingent on the filling of the Holy Spirit. Your decision-making as a parent is contingent on the Holy Spirit. Your job, your plans, your future, it's all in the hands of God. And if we want to receive the fullness and the goodness that God has planned for us, then we must be willing to submit to the Spirit, to take His supply and not our own. That is the source of deliverance and salvation. He is the fuel and we require that fuel if we desire progress.

Remember what we've read so far in this chapter. God *WANTS* us to get grace and peace and effectiveness. He's set up all these situations so that He could bring us to where we are and use us to further His work. He *WANTS* us to succeed. But we get fearful. Worse, we get complacent. And we start to lay down on the job. We start lowering our standards. We stop believing how important the Gospel is. And that doesn't just effect our testimony and our evangelism, but it effects every other part of life as well. Because now we're empty of that peace that we need for decision-making. We're worried about the future. We're living in relationships that demand grace and love but we're not receiving our supply of grace and love from the Spirit.

So, first and foremost, we must stay in the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the helper for the Church age. Jesus is no longer hitch-hiking around Galilee. But He has sent us the Holy Spirit to help us. We must trust that God is a worthy pilot for our lives. We must trust that His navigation is sure and true.

How do we stay in tune with the Holy Spirit? Well, Paul gives us one way right here: **Prayer**. While we must first **trust** the Lord and His Spirit, we second must **communicate** with Him through prayer.

Paul affirms here that prayer is not a soulless ritual, but it is in fact a powerful conduit by which we submit ourselves to God, discover His will and receive His filling. Paul points out that your prayers not only draw *you* closer to God, it not only gets *you* in line with His will, but it can influence situations in the lives of others.

I think we believe this principle; the power of prayer. But I know that we fail to pray this way. At least I do. When prayer becomes soulless, when it becomes impersonal or ritualistic, then it's like when we talk to our wives while reading the paper. A few words, but no conversation. No real interaction. And if we pray that way, then our communication with Christ and the Father and the Spirit is going to break down. And when our communication with God breaks down, then we will be missing out on the refilling that He wants to do in our lives and we're going to start losing our trust and our confidence in Him.

Philippians 1.20 - according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

Because Paul knew Jesus, because he trusted Him, because he received that continual supply from the Holy Spirit, he was able to have an excitement about the things that were going on in his life.

I don't suppose he *enjoyed* many aspects of his life, the beatings, the stonings, the discouragements, but he had surrendered his life to Christ and was on assignment for him. So, he knew that with each new day was a new experience that God had laid before him. He knew that Christ had been unleashed in his life and he was excited about the fact that every day as a servant brought him closer to pay day, when he would stand before the Master, complete and finished.

But, as usual, the Christian life can not be lived on autopilot. He says in verse 20 that 'in nothing I shall be ashamed.'

Remember, Paul's life was Jesus. To live is Christ. Like us, his assignment was to magnify the Lord no matter what happened. So, while he was living life, Paul was careful not to be shamed by disqualifying himself.

1 Corinthians 9.27 - But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Paul understood that a Christian must stay within the boundaries and guidelines that God has revealed to us so that we *CAN* magnify the Lord and not be ashamed by bringing a reproach or a blemish on His name.

It's like a boxer spending weeks training and getting ready for the big fight, only to get to the weigh in and realize that he hadn't paid any attention to his weight. He's not in the correct class anymore.

A desire to serve God is key, but if we can't bring that desire under discipline, then we will find that much of our work will be disqualified.

Our passage concludes with the famous words:

Philippians 1.21 - For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Death cannot be an advantage unless Christ is your life. Certainly, if a person does not know the Lord, death becomes the ultimate defeat. There is no recovery when a lost individual enters into eternity.

But even Christians need to think about death. Will the day of our death be a day of regret? When we're before the Lord, are these days on earth going to last? Have they made a difference in the Kingdom? Is there any reward? Or did we live for something other than Christ?

My life is about...what?

What is life all about? If we cannot fill that question with the answer that Paul gave, then we cannot attain the fullness of the prize that Jesus wants us to win.

And this is a question that we all need to put to ourselves. Because it's easy to brush this off and say, "Well of course, Jesus." But we all truly need to take time to question our lives. Am I *really* living with Jesus Christ as the focus? Can I see that desire demonstrated in my day-to-day life?

If we want life to be Christ, then we must first trust that the Lord wants to accomplish the extraordinary things He's promised us in His word. We must, by faith, take His word for it that His plan is to fill our lives, bless our marriages, empower our activity, all those things we read about.

Then we must communicate with the Lord. We must discover who God is and what He wants for us in His word. We must converse with Him in real, personal prayer. Not a ritual. Not an obligation. But real prayer where we lay ourselves before God and concede ourselves to Him. Where we truly receive spiritual filling for our thirst and supply for the difficulties of life.

And then we must understand that our lives are a partnership with Jesus Christ. He wants us to get the prize. He wants us to have the confidence and the joy and the expectation that we see in Paul. Those characteristics aren't reserved for a few mutant-Christians. There's no such thing. Those things are *offered* to **every** Christian who is willing to accept the call, any Christian who is willing to say, "Ok, you want me to go over here? Let's go. You want me to say this? Let's talk. You want me to make this decision? Let's do it." And along the way we stay disciplined and focused so that we're nothing we do disqualifies us. We stay trained for the opposition that will come against us, so that no one will rob us of that peace or that joy. We stay disciplined so that we don't get knocked off course by some temptation or sin.

If we are willing to understand who we really are as Christians and then pair that understanding with real submission to Jesus, then we will find the purpose and the help and the endurance that we all need in life. That's what I need. That's what you need. And the good news is that's what God wants for you too: That you become an active believer who magnifies God, brings hope to those around you and fears nothing.