



To Live is Christ, To Die is Even Better

- I. Introduction. Paul was living under house arrest awaiting trial, and his future was uncertain. The Philippian church loved Paul, and they were concerned about his future. If found guilty, he could be martyred for his faith. They sent Epaphroditus to check on Paul and bring him financial and emotional encouragement. Before Paul addressed the turmoil in the Philippian church, he spoke about his upcoming trial and current adverse circumstances.

- II. Paul's Circumstances
 - A. Imprisonment- 1:12-14. Paul was under house arrest in Rome. Many believers saw this as a tragedy and a barrier to the advancement of the gospel. However, Paul's perspective was quite different. He believed there were actually two benefits of his imprisonment.
 - 1. Paul's chains were a testimony to the world. Everyone in the palace guard and many people in the area knew Paul was in prison for his faith in Jesus. They were curious about why Paul would go to prison for his faith. This led to many spiritual conversations and some conversions.
 - 2. Paul's chains were a motivation for the church. Paul's willingness to suffer for his faith and even go to prison was an inspiration to other believers. It empowered them to share their faith with little regard for the consequences. They were able to overcome their fears and be vocal about their faith. Paul's example gave other Christians great boldness to talk about Jesus in adverse conditions.
 - 3. Application: Mature believers are not bound by circumstances. Paul could not control his circumstances, but he could control his response to what was happening around him. Mature disciples of Jesus don't allow circumstances to dictate their faith. They understand that God uses adversity for his glory, and they willingly walk through the fire to make God's name look great to the world. How do most people handle adversity in our culture? How are we called to handle adversity? What is the outcome for believers when they "suffer well?"

 - B. Divisive people- 1:15-18. Paul addressed Christians who hated him and his ministry, and they tried to cause trouble for Paul while he was in prison, probably through backbiting and slander.
 - 1. Paul acknowledged that there were many people who were preaching Christ out of pure motives and genuine love for God and others. They were having a huge impact for the Kingdom.
 - 2. However, there were those Christians who preached Jesus from a place of envy and jealousy (probably of Paul). Their motive was selfish ambition, hoping that by

tearing down Paul they would escalate their influence and following among the believers. Paul took the high road. His conclusion was that regardless of motive, Jesus was being preached and people were coming being saved. That was enough for him.

3. Application: mature disciples keep the big picture in the forefront of all issues. This comment by Paul was his first of many comments in the letter on how to handle conflict with others. Paul calls us to rise above the conflict and see the big picture. Then we come back down into the minutia of the issue with the perspective of God. Paul always kept the mission of Christ at the center of everything; he refused to be distracted from the core of his mission. As leaders, we are called to do the same thing. Remember this: when you are doing God's work, people will talk both good and bad about you. Don't believe either side. Listen only to God. What is our initial response when people attack us? How do we rise above immature behavior to lead others through adverse situations? What are your best practices to keep the big picture in mind when those around you are trying to pull you down into the fray with them?
- C. Future- 1:19-26. Paul's future was uncertain. He might be found innocent and released from prison, or he might be found guilty and die for his faith. The Philippians were scared for Paul and worried about the future. How could the Kingdom of God continue without their leader? Paul told them there were two options- both good outcomes.
1. Paul dies- and that is great news. Paul promised the Philippian believers that he would be delivered. God might deliver him through his death. That is the goal of every believer and the best option by far. He would be delivered into the presence of God for all eternity. It is within this context that Paul states, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is even better." Death is a home run for believers.
 2. Paul lives- and that is great news. If Paul lives, nothing changes. His whole life was wrapped up in preaching Christ. If he is released from prison, he will resume his ministry and go see the Philippian church. Paul believed he would be released and see them again, but he wanted the church to see his situation from an eternal perspective. Either option brought him great joy.
 3. Application: mature disciples see things from an eternal perspective. If Paul died, he would go to heaven. If he lived, he would push forward the Kingdom agenda. Either one was a win! We are warned over and over in scripture not to fall in love with this world; as believers we do not belong here. Satan works hard to get us comfortable in this foreign land. What are some things Satan does to make us blind us to an eternal perspective? Why do we struggle to see life from God's perspective? What are some things you can do to increase your "eternal awareness?" What is your takeaway from this study?

