



Philippians 1:18b-26 To Live is Christ

*Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹for I know that **through your prayers** and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. ²⁰I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹For to me, **to live is Christ** and to die is gain. ²²If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. Philippians 1:18b-26*

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Back Story

1. Many scholars believe that at this time Paul is in prison in Rome.
2. It is obvious that Paul is in prison because of his devotion to Christ.
3. He is facing governing authorities whose verdict could result in his death.

B. Significant Words/Phrases

1. Soteria translated as 'salvation' in present perfect tense indicating 'have been and continue to be saved'. Salvation is a present possession which must be explored day after day, but the full experience of that salvation lies in the future (Motyer, Kindle 1119).
 - a. Soteria is translated as 'deliverance' in RV and NIV, which implies release from prison. Should be 'salvation'.
 - b. Phil. 1:6 'He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.'
 - c. Each item in Paul's experience is but another of the Father's finishing touches, and all will result in the full enjoyment of salvation (Motyer, Kindle 1131).
2. Prayer. We have an obligation to put one another's spiritual growth in the very forefront of our prayers, and to take the responsibility very seriously. Paul even sensitively suggests that the sufficient supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ for my brother or sister in Christ depends directly on my prayer for them, and that failing my prayer the supply will dry up also (Motyer Kindle 1154).
3. Hope. Not the vague expectation meant by the 21st Century use that implies uncertain outcome, but the Biblical meaning of full certain expectation of outcome, but uncertainty of the means of achieving that outcome, and the uncertainty of the time of fulfillment.
4. Ashamed. Paul is not fearful that his conduct before the authorities will be shameful. Rather, he is aware the forces of evil gathered against him will attempt to shame him, and that a judgement against him would be shameful in the eyes of the world. That didn't bother Paul because he knew he would ultimately triumph over evil because of his hope (trust) is in the Lord.

II. INTERCESSORY PRAYER

A. Paul is dependent on the prayers of the Philippians (v19)

1. Paul's prayers for the sanctification and final salvation of his readers are present in much of his letters (1 Cor. 1:4-9; Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Phil. 1:3-11; Col. 1:9-14; 2 Thess. 1:11-12).
2. Paul expected his churches to take prayer seriously also, and also to pray on his own behalf.
3. Paul saw those prayers as linked with God's provision of the Spirit to him, and together they provide the help he needed to face the authorities with courage.
4. Paul did not conceive of sanctification and ultimate salvation as solely private enterprises.

5. Individual Christians need the prayerful intercession of their brothers and sisters for their spiritual well-being so that they “may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ” (1:10).
6. Fabian von Schlabrendorf was a young lawyer tortured many times for his opposition to Hitler who stated: “We all made the discovery that a man can endure far more pain than he would have deemed possible. Those of us who never learned to pray did so now, and found that prayer and only prayer can bring comfort in such terrible straits, and it gives more than human endurance. We learned also that the prayers of our friends and relatives could transmit currents of strength to us.” Erwin Lutzer’s *Hitler’s Cross*, pg. 162.

III. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. General thoughts

1. All believers have the Spirit all the time, but they at times can experience the Spirit’s manifest presence in greater power and abundance.
2. God ordains the prayers of his people as a means through which to accomplish His purposes, including His purposes for the perseverance of Christians in the faith and for their ultimate salvation.
3. “You ... are controlled not by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Rom. 8:9).
4. So the Spirit doesn’t come and go, but our prayers are used by God to strengthen our brothers and sisters in Christ to be strengthened through increased power of the Spirit’s presence.

B. Expectations

1. In response to our prayers, we should expect the Spirit to come upon believers with surprising power.
2. In response to our prayers, we should expect the Holy Spirit to come upon believers for surprising purposes.
3. In response to our prayers, we should expect the Spirit to violate Western notions of the superiority of rational and empirical thought.
4. In response to our prayers, we should expect the Spirit to come with unusual abundance on believers who are undergoing suffering, especially suffering for their faith.
5. In response to our prayers, we should expect the Spirit’s abundant presence will help us bear courageous and clear testimony to the Gospel.

C. Connectivity

1. Paul is connecting intercessory prayer with the work of the Holy Spirit.
2. The two go hand in hand, but we can’t receive if we don’t ask. (James 4:2)
3. So intercessory prayer is vital for personal and corporate growth in the Kingdom
4. Not so easily done!
 - a. Can’t intercede most effectively if you’re not in fellowship
 - b. Can’t receive if no one knows your need.
 - c. Personal example: Created a personal prayer support team of members in and out of Lighthouse a year ago. Only used it twice.
5. But possible! The von Schlabrendorf story is an example of modern intercessory prayer that worked.

IV. THROUGH YOUR PRAYERS

A. Our well-being is dependent on personal time with Christ

B. Paul knew that prayer for him brought benefit to him and **to them**

C. Why should we pray?

1. Prayer is when we intentionally draw near to God.
2. When we go to Him in our weakness or on behalf of others in theirs we give God the chance to heal.
 - a. 2Cor. 12:9 *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”*
3. Prayer helps facilitate God’s presence manifesting in our heart and helps us to feel His love for us in a greater way.

- a. Phil. 1:9-11 ⁹*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

V. A DIFFICULT CHOICE

A. 'To die is gain'

1. At the initial salvation experience, Christ became everything to Paul and to every new Christian.
2. Everything he had once found valuable now pales compared to the value found in Christ.
3. Paul is still continuing to discover the surpassing worth of Christ
4. Death is the ultimate gain in Christ

B. 'To live is Christ'

1. Fruitful labor
2. Whole life can be summed up as a progressive abandonment of everything else in the interest of possessing more and more of Christ.
3. 'Gaining Christ'= the Christian's progressive experience of sanctification, growth in grace and becoming more and more like Yeshua.
4. Paul's love for the Philippians was so profound that he recognized their need for his prayerful ministry
5. Paul chooses to live on so that others may grow in Christ and that Christ may be glorified in him.

VI. TO LIVE IS CHRIST

A. Paul has been supported by the prayers of the Philippians

B. As a result the Holy Spirit has been guiding, supporting, and protecting Paul in a greater way

C. Paul has settled the main thrust of his life

1. What am I living for?
 - a. What I live for (my purpose) determines the direction of my life.
 - b. What I think determines what I do.
 - c. If I have no purpose or direction, I'll be swept along by the currents of the age.
2. What does it mean to 'live is Christ?'
 - a. In our daily lives, it means we live in fellowship with Christ, communing with Him and depending on Him for everything.
 - b. It means growing to know Christ intimately (Phil. 3:10).
 - c. It means growing to love Christ with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30).
 - d. It means submitting all of my thoughts, emotions, words, and deeds to the lordship of Christ, so that I seek to please Him in all respects (Col. 1:10).
 - e. It means growing to experience Christ as my "all in all" (Eph. 1:23; Col. 3:11). Every aspect of life must be centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. The glorious person of Christ, and nothing less, is the Christian life.
3. Paul was clear and focused on his purpose and what he was living for.

D. How did Paul get to this place?

1. Personal example: I am very goal-oriented, which is to say when I see a need I find a way to fix it and don't stop until I do.
 - a. Tempted to do things to get to Christ.
 - b. Early on in my walk, I looked at 'to live is Christ' and translated it as WWJD. Christ,
 - 1) Would not go to bars
 - 2) Did feed the poor, etc.
 - 3) So that is what I must do too.
2. Not so with Paul
 - a. He chose to 'abide in Christ.'
 - 1) John 15:9 *As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.*

- 2) Abide means to stay in or live in His love.
- b. When I followed WWJD, I was trying to get to Christ by doing things for Christ.
- 3. Not so with Paul
 - a. Paul's exterior action flowed from an already existing interior relationship.
 - b. Had personal, intimate relationship with Him
 - c. Spent time with him.
- 4. Personal example: Early on in my walk, I decided to read through Scripture in a year, which meant a certain number of verses per day (goal-oriented!)
 - a. Became a read-through, not a pray-through, or meditate-through.
- 5. Not so with Paul
 - a. Paul, the super-apostle, still had his struggles as do we all (the thorn in his side).
 - b. But his relationship with Yeshua gave him strength to succeed
 - 1) Phil 3:7-8 *⁷But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I might gain Christ.*
- E. Paul was so settled and so focused that he could write these famous verses:
 - 1. *¹³I can do all things through him who gives me strength. (Phil. 4:13)*
 - 2. *⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)*
 - 3. *¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. 8:1)*
 - 4. *If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom. 8:31)*
 - 5. *²⁰We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Cor. 5:20)*
 - 6. Many, many, many more like this.

VII. APPLICATION

- A. For thousands of years, back to the ancient Greeks, humans have tried to explain life
- B. Used human-based analysis
 - 1. Just existence: Life has no purpose at all?
 - 2. Epicurean: Just eat, drink, and be merry?
 - 3. Stoic: Life is just to be endured?
 - 4. Cynic: Doesn't really make any difference anyway?
 - 5. Mystic: Life's troubles are the world's fault?
 - 6. Materialist: Get everything you can?
 - 7. Humanist: Do good things, and improve the world?
 - 8. Family: Family heritage and legacy is more important than anything?
 - 9. Religiosity: Life is about performing religious duties?
- C. Not so with Paul
 - 1. The only thing that counts is a personal relationship with Yeshua.
 - 2. For Paul, whatever came to be, Christ would be exalted.
 - 3. Christ is more important than life itself to Paul, and the joy and progress of his fellow believers is necessary to the advancement of the Kingdom.
- D. WWJD (What would Jesus do?) is not relevant without a commensurate inner connection with Christ: it is not solely what we do that counts; it's who we are. What we do (WWJD) flows best out of who we are in Christ.
 - 1. *²⁰I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. (Gal. 2:20)*
 - 2. *¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here. (2 Cor. 5:17)*

3. ¹⁹*Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.* (1Cor. 6:19-20)
- E.** We have complete security in Messiah
1. ¹³*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.* John 15:13
 2. ⁸*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Rom. 5:8
 3. ³⁷*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Rom. 8:38-39
 4. ²⁷*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one."* John 10:27-30
- F.** So 'To Live is Christ' has one thing at its foundation: spending time with Him and growing in our realization that He loves us.
1. Is there a time of abiding in our day?
 2. Conversing with Him "on the go" throughout the day is good but not enough.
 - a. No time for intimate fellowship
 - b. Abiding means focused presence: with Him and Him alone
 3. WWJD is ineffective as an end in itself because it focuses on action as the goal and not on relationship with the One who can change our heart and subsequently our actions.
 4. Abiding changes our heart; interior change causes outward change, then WWJD will come more naturally from a transformed heart.

VIII. REFERENCES

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