

Don't Lose Heart - Philippians 1:18-26

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## Core Text:

**Philippians 1:21 LSB**

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

John MacArthur explains this text in its simplest meaning:

*“For Paul, life is summed up in Jesus Christ; Christ was his reason for being.”*

## Introduction

*Wherever man may stand, whatever he may do, to whatever he may apply his hand, in agriculture, in commerce, and in industry, or his mind, in the world of art, and science, he is, in whatever it may be, constantly standing before the face of his God. He is employed in the service of his God, he has strictly to obey his God, and above all, he has to aim at the glory of his God - **Abraham Kuyper***

I believe that Lord lay this sermon on my heart because there are many in our church who need to hear it. It is not a hard sermon, it is a soft and compassionate sermon. I pray with all my heart this morning that it is a sermon that comforts, encourages and reminds us not to lose heart, because we have a saviour who always is beside us no matter what we face.

Paul as friend...

Paul shows us this in our text this morning. Many speak of this text as Paul's dilemma, but I see something very different in this text. This text is not about Paul in any way, it is about Jesus. Although Paul speaks of a choice he has to make, Paul is saying that without Jesus, life wouldn't be worth living.

## 1. I Will Rejoice (v. 18)

### Philippians 1:18 LSB

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice.

**Yes**, and I will rejoice,

The core idea of v.18 is Paul telling us "I rejoice" (*chairo*) and then "I will rejoice." (*chairesomai*)

Paul says the same thing twice, but there's more going on here than meets the eye.

In Greek, his first rejoicing statement is "replaced" by the affirmation that he **will** rejoice.

It is phrased as if the first statement needed to be corrected in some way. He could have simply said one or the other, or combined the two, but instead he replaces the first.

The Greek word in the second statement makes it sound like committing to rejoicing is the least likely thing to do. He's not only happy now, but he'll be happy for the rest of his life.

The final section of **v.18** corrects Paul's first claim about rejoicing.

Why?

If he had simply said, "I rejoice," he would have implied that he would not continue to do so. If he had simply stated that he will rejoice, it could have been interpreted that he was waiting for some kind of change to occur first. "In this, I rejoice," you could paraphrase the sentiment. In fact, I intend to do so in the future."

I believe one of the sentiments that Paul is relaying is: To be able to rejoice, you must do more than simply accept your circumstances.

You must have faith and be thankful.

This Faith or trust is founded on the character of this person Jesus Christ who started the good work as we see in,

**Philippians 1:6 LSB**

*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

It is faith in **His** faithfulness that **He** has demonstrated. This meant trusting God because **He** chose Paul, an unlikely early church leader, to be an apostle. What else would Paul cling to if he didn't have trust? **Nothing.**

Too often, our faith in the Lord is founded on our own understanding or engages only a portion of our heart, but

we see in the book of Proverbs that God wants us to,  
**Proverbs 3:5–6 LSB**

Trust in Yahweh with all your heart

And do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge Him,

And He will make your paths straight.

When life's storms hit, faulty foundations crumble. We must trust the Lord with all of our hearts and not rely on our own understanding. He must be our foundation. When the storm is battering against you and it seems that waves are getting the better of you...**Do not lose heart! Trust in God!**

**Thanksgiving**, is a theme that runs throughout Philippians, and is one of the best litmus tests for trust. If I'm afraid of my situation or unhappy about it, it's likely that I'm relying on my own understanding. This same perspective leads me to believe that my situation is incorrect, unfair, or that something needs to change. If I truly believe that God is in control of everything, my perspective will reflect this. I may not like my situation, but I can choose to trust God to carry out His purposes no matter how bad things get. My decision to trust in God's character allows me to be

grateful for His provision even when it is not what I would choose. **Choose not to loose heart! Trust in God!**

What is Paul's reaction to his situation? He rejoices, and he will continue to rejoice. In our discussion of Phil1:12 we discovered that in Scripture, perspectives on circumstances change more frequently than the circumstances themselves. The same thing happens with Paul and his imprisonment.

By sharing his perspective and positive response to his circumstances with the Philippians, he challenges them to do the same. He does this because he is aware that he has been appointed to defend the gospel (Phil 1:15).

Changes in circumstances have no effect on your calling from God. It is one thing to affirm your calling verbally; it is quite another to live your life in light of it and to see your circumstances through this lens...**Believe in your calling!** We've all had "dark nights of the soul" that caused us to question our purpose. Doubts creep in, especially when people are critical or the situation appears bleak. It's easy to become discouraged when we lose sight of the big picture.

But if we follow God and stay on track with His plan for our lives, we can be confident that the one who started the good work in us will finish it (Phil 1:6).

God is not only the creator of all things, but He is also the finisher of what He has begun. **Therefore Do NOT lose**

## **heart! Trust in God!**

So, what is the bigger picture that allows Paul to rejoice despite his circumstances?

It is his assurance that these things will work out in his favour (Phil 1:19). This assurance is founded on two things: the Philippians' prayers and the Holy Spirit's assistance.

## **2. A No-Loose Proposition (v.20)**

### **Philippians 1:20 LSB**

according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

Just as in Phil 1:18, Paul emphasises that Christ is exalted regardless of the outcome. The Philippians were worried about Paul's well-being in prison and feared the worst. He demonstrated to them that the spread of the gospel was not dependent on the motivation of those preaching. In this section, he claims that the same is true for his current situation. Two things are certain to happen whether he remains alive and productive or is executed in prison. He will not be ashamed, and Christ will exalt in him. These things do not depend on his life or death, freedom or imprisonment.

Paul portrays this as a no-lose situation. If his comfort or

physical release from prison is the standard by which things are measured, his prospects appear bleak. Being appointed to defend the gospel (Phil 1:16) did not come with a guarantee of safety. Despite the risk of imprisonment, the situation has aided rather than hindered his cause. When exalting Christ becomes our standard of evaluation rather than comfort or security, our priorities shift dramatically. Paul's faith is more than a set of deeply held beliefs. It is undeniably reflected in his value judgements, which he describes in greater detail in Phil 1:21-26.

### **3. Don't Lose Heart - To live is Christ and to Die gain! (v.21)**

At the end of the previous section, Paul made an **audacious** statement.

He stated that *it didn't matter whether he lived or died; Christ would be exalted in him either way.*

What a difference a perspective can make!

How would our priorities and perspectives change if seeing Christ exalted was truly the most important thing in our lives? What effect would it have on our future? What effect would it have on how we think or how we feel about life?

***We wouldn't lose heart so easily. We would be confident in our trust in God our Saviour!***

The secret of not losing heart by dear brothers and sisters

is: ***to live to be Christ, and to die to be gain.***

“For to me” indicates that what follows strengthens and supports Paul’s assertion at the end of Phil 1:20. Paul clearly says that whatever happens to him serves to glorify and magnify Christ.

How can Paul claim that Christ will be exalted in both his life and death?

***Because living means continuing to work for Christ, while dying means going to be with Him.***

The simplicity with which Paul approaches life-and-death issues, changes everything.

To me, this indicates that Paul's value system and world view reflects his own perspective on the matter, but it is also one that we should adopt.

Paul has learn’t the secret of not loosing heart even when death stares him in the face. It is to trust in His Saviour, it is to know that whether he lives or dies it is for the glory of the KING.

#### **4. Paul’s Dilemma (v.21 -24)**

Paul explains how he weighs the options before him: **living versus dying.**

Should he stay or should he go because Christ is glorified in him in either case, and because the gospel is advancing whether he is free to participate or not? Paul understands that he is not the man who can. Paul knows that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not dependant on him.

He could have simply told us his decision, but instead he



takes us through his thought process. In Phil 1:22, he chooses the first option of living, qualifying it as in the flesh.

He makes it plain that he is discussing his current life and not life after death where he will be living in a glorified body. His continued ministry in this life means **fruitful work for Christ**, which is a benefit to the believers to whom he ministers (Phil 1:24).

From where I am standing, dying appears to be the better option. I mean Paul would no longer have to suffer pain or imprisonment, nor would he have to deal with church problems. It would no longer be his problem.

Remaining, on the other hand, means more fruitful labour for Christ. Which will he pick? At this point, it appears that he is leaning towards leaving as the better option.

Paul makes it clear at the end of Phil 1:22 and into **v.23** that this is not an easy decision.

Why is it so difficult?

Because life is difficult!

The prospect of leaving behind the pain, suffering, and hardships of earthly life to be with Christ is undeniably better. Who wouldn't want to be in the heaven described in Revelation 7:16-17—it is a place without hunger or thirst, where God Himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes?

The prospect of heaven must have sounded even better to

Paul. He received 39 lashes five times, was beaten with rods and shipwrecked three times, and was even stoned once (2 Cor 11:23-29)! He had experienced adversity. Paul deserved a break more than anyone. It's understandable that leaving this life to be with Christ appealed to some, but there are other factors to consider.

Despite the possibility of fruitful work if he stays, leaving and being with Christ has appeal. After all, if Christ is exalted in either case, if the gospel advances with or without him, why not join him?

These additional concerns are raised in, **Philippians 1:24 LSB** yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

He previously stated that remaining in the flesh and ministering would be beneficial. He uses the same "*in the flesh*" terminology as in,

**Philippians 1:22 LSB** But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know what I will choose. But he adds that remaining isn't just for fruitfulness; it's also for the Philippians' sake. Teaching the Philippians is more important than going to be with Christ, just as his

imprisonment was less important than the advancement of the gospel (Phil 1:18).

The needs of Paul's brothers and sisters are what tip the scales in their favour. What is most important to Paul is secondary. Paul isn't trying to be a martyr here, this shows that he truly loved these brothers and sisters in Philippi. Paul loves the church of his Saviour Jesus Christ!

Even though leaving and being with Christ is preferable, Paul takes a different path. In keeping with the book's overall theme, Paul uses the more appealing option of leaving as a backdrop for revealing his decision to stay and serve the church.

We would not know what it cost him...if he had rushed to deliver his final verdict without first considering all options.

While leaving his circumstances to be with Christ was desirable, it would have been selfish on his part. Instead, he chooses the same type of sacrificial service that Christ provides in,

**Philippians 2:5-11 LSB**

Have this *way of thinking* in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

who, although existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a slave, by

being made in the likeness of men.

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God also highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

and that EVERY TONGUE WILL CONFESS that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

Paul makes his decision after listing the advantages and disadvantages of each option. He could have skipped the comparison, but that would have obscured the significance of his decision. Opening up his decision-making process invites us to follow in his footsteps.

How do we decide whether to join a ministry or not, whether to minister to the needs of others?

Do we only consider our own interests?

What about other people's interests?

**Philippians 2:4 LSB**

not *merely* looking out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Paul chooses to continue serving the Philippians because

he believes their needs outweigh his desire to depart and be with Christ.

## **Conclusion**

If we pay close attention when reading this text, we see a man who is unselfish and wants his brothers and sisters to understand what the christian life is all about. More than that, he wants these people to understand that Christ is worth more than anything or anyone in your life.

Paul was truly all in when it came to following and serving Christ. He had no hesitation when he was required to sacrifice everything for the sake of his calling, for the sake of the gospel, for the sake ultimately for Christ, for God.

When we read 2 Tim 4:6-8 we see the character of Paul,

### **2 Timothy 4:6-8 LSB**

For 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.

In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

If there was a stone on Paul's grave, it may have read as follows:

*The great apostle of the Gentiles, he was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, and before his conversion was called Saul. After suffering various persecutions at Jerusalem, Iconium, Lystra, Phillippi and Thessalonica, he was carried prisoner to Rome. Paul loved the churches so much that although he had been imprisoned, afterwards visited the churches of Greece and Rome, and preached the gospel in Spain and France. On returning to Rome, he was arrested by order of Nero, and beheaded.*

*Paul our beloved brother, now rests in the arms of Christ his sufferings for the name of Christ now behind him and he is now enjoying the glory and company of his saviour that he loved above all else.*

If Paul could tell us something this morning, he would say,  
**Don't Lose Heart, Trust in God.**

I want to remind you this morning of the words of our Saviour:

**Matthew 11:28-30 LSB**

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Amen

## **Doxology**

2 Corinthians 13:11–14 (LSB)

Finally, brothers, rejoice, be restored, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen