

# Philippians 1:19–30

## *The Good Life Death*

The Summit Church, *Philippians*

*MPT: Christ is magnified when his people count him as life, death as gain, and gospel faithfulness as worth any suffering.*

*MPS: You're not ready to live the good life until Christ is your life and death is your gain.*

*UFN: You're not ready to live until you are ready to die.*

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### Live Reading at Campuses: Philippians 1:19–30

<sup>18b</sup>Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup>for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup>as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup>For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup>If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup>I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup>But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup>Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup>so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

<sup>27</sup>Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup>and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. <sup>29</sup>For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, <sup>30</sup>engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Philippians 1 if you're not already there. Before we get going ... 10 years preaching at The Summit Church.

- More than ever, I believe in the **saving power of the gospel**. In fact, I believe some of you are going to get saved TODAY.

### PRAY

1. Ask the HS to meet you...
2. Pray for me...

## INTRODUCTION

In case you've missed the last two weeks, we're in week 3 of our series through the book of Philippians. Philippians is such a fascinating book because it's one of, if not *the* most **JOYFUL** book in all of the Bible. In this letter, Paul, the author, uses the Greek word for joy and rejoicing no less than **16x in just 104 short verses**. Cuz of that, we've titled this series: "***The Good Life.***"

I want you to think about that phrase and what it means to you: THE GOOD LIFE. Now, as you think about that good life, what if I told you this book could help you build that life you've always wanted? Let's play a little game of "Honest Hour"... How would you fill in this blank? The good life is  
\_\_\_\_\_.

- A life with more **peace**, more **money**? ... Less **crazy** ... Better **relationships**, better-behaved **kids** (or just *behaved kids* in general) ... Clearer **purpose**?
- Most of us have a picture in our minds of **the good life** ... and my guess is that it sounds something like that ...
  - ... *a healthy and happy family*
  - ... *enough money to not be stressed*
  - ... *kids who love Jesus, sleep through the night, and don't embarrass you in public*
  - ... *enough margin to breathe*
  - ... *getting to a place where you can say, "I'm okay"*

Somewhere along the way, many of us have assumed that Jesus came to help us get *that* life. And listen, that version of the "good life" is not all wrong. I'm pro-**peace/purpose/joy**, pro-**financial-freedom**, pro-**healthy-family**, pro-**less-crazy**. Amen and amen. Those are **GOOD gifts**.

The issue isn't that those things are **bad**; the issue is that we've made THAT the goal and then hired **Jesus as our Life Coach** to achieve it.

- If you and I come to Jesus merely to **get that good life**, we haven't **surrendered** to him; we've **recruited him**.

These last few verses in Philippians 1 are gonna **confront that head-on**, because Paul is going to show us a completely different definition of the good life.

## CONTEXT

See, if Paul's joy were based on his circumstances, Philippians would be the shortest book in the Bible:

*Dear Philippians,*

*Everything is terrible.*

*Pray for me.*

*Amen.*

Cuz, remember, Paul's **not writing this letter from a beach house** with a **warm cup of coffee** overlooking the ocean—he's writing from a **Roman prison**.

- He's got **critics** attacking him, his **body is chained**, and he has an **ongoing trial** that may very well **end in his execution**.
- Suffice it to say: Paul's not living his best life when he writes this.

Yet, despite all of this, Paul is more **free**, more **joyful**, more **courageous**, and more **alive** than almost anybody you will ever meet ... and the question is *WHY?* Because Paul's definition of the good life is not circumstantial.

## WALKTHROUGH

We see that right there at the end of v 18—despite his **chains**, his **critics**, his **enemies**, and his potential **impending death** he says, <sup>18b</sup>**Yes, and I will rejoice ...**

In week 1, Pastor J.D. showed us how gratitude is not a feeling; it's a practice... how Paul's gratitude was born out of an **overflow of understanding God's good providence** over everything in his life.

And when you have that, no matter what's happening, you can rejoice. That was Pastor Bryan's entire point last week in week 2: **We must see EVERYTHING in life as an opportunity to advance the gospel.** Joy comes from seeing all of life through the lens of **Romans 8:28: We know that in ALL things—even the bad things—God works for your good and the advancement of the gospel.**

**Therefore, Paul says, I rejoice** even in my suffering <sup>19</sup>**for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,**

Now, "**deliverance**" is an interesting word for Paul to use, because when we hear "**deliverance**," we usually think, "*God's gonna get me out of this. He's gonna deliver me ... from this prison, sickness, conflict, financial pressure, this sin habit, or whatever.*" And **God definitely CAN do that!**

- I mean, Paul obviously believes in the power of prayer—he says, "**through your prayers, Philippians, this will turn out for my deliverance.**" So he obviously believes those prayers matter.

- And not just that, he also says this deliverance will come through **“the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”**
- So Paul’s confidence isn’t just that God might *change* his circumstances; **it’s that God will *sustain him* in his circumstances through the prayers of God’s people and the power of God’s Spirit.**

This is profound cuz, at this point, Paul has no clue if he’ll ever get out of prison alive. For all he knows, the next time he walks out of that cell, it’s to walk to his death. Yet he still says, **“This will turn out for my deliverance.”**

- He can say that cuz he knows something Rome doesn’t: Rome may control the **verdict**, but Jesus controls the **outcome**.
- Rome can say, *“Guilty. Death. Keep him in chains.”* But Rome is not who gets the final word over Paul’s life.
  - **Proverbs 21:2**, *“The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.”*
  - **Proverbs 16:22**, *“The lot is cast ... but every decision is from the LORD.”*

He knows it’s highly unlikely Rome’s gonna be like, *“Hey, Paul, our bad. Big misunderstanding. Sorry about the chains. You’re free to go ... here’s a CFA gift card for your trouble.”* That’s probably not where this whole thing is headed.

Yet he still believes through-and-through, **“Either way, I’M GETTING DELIVERED: If I’m **exonerated**, I’m delivered from prison. If I’m **executed**, I’m delivered into the presence of Christ. Even if I’m not delivered **FROM** this prison, I can still be delivered **while I’m IN** this prison. Either way, it’s a win-win. I can’t lose.”**

**That’s a completely different kind of FREEDOM. That’s the freedom and joy of knowing you can be delivered ... without being delivered.**

- That’s the joy of being delivered from **despair** without being delivered from the **diagnosis**.
- That’s the freedom of being delivered from **needing everyone’s approval** without being delivered from **criticism**.
- That’s the freedom of being delivered from **bitterness** without being delivered from the **relationship**.
- That’s the joy of being delivered from **shame** without being able to **rewrite your past**.

You see what Paul is showing us?: **Deliverance is not always God **unlocking the door**; sometimes, deliverance is God **making you free while the door is still locked.****

**DON’T HEAR ME WRONG ON THIS:** You should pray for the **door to open**. Pray for **healing**. Pray for **reconciliation**. Pray for the **prodigal**. Pray for the **provision**. Pray for God to **change the circumstance ... but don’t miss the deeper miracle that **God may want to deliver you before he delivers you.****

- (Sometimes, deliverance is not your **kid immediately coming home ... it’s your heart learning to trust the Father while you wait on the porch.**)

Friends, the good life is not a life where **nothing bad can touch you** ... the good life is a life where **everything that touches you** has to pass through the hands of a sovereign and loving God who is committed to **your ultimate joy** and **his eternal glory**.

So he continues: <sup>20</sup>as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

Paul says, “No matter what happens, I won’t be ashamed. On the contrary, I’m filled with hope and expectation. Because no matter what happens, Christ will be honored, whether by life or death.”

- In other words, Paul’s greatest hope isn’t that Christ will get him out of a prison cell ... it’s the belief that Christ will get glory from his life, even if his life *ends in that prison cell*.

Again, think about that kind of **freedom** ... to be in Paul’s position, and to see EVERY trial and EVERY possible outcome—life/death, release/execution, comfort/suffering—as an opportunity to make Jesus look as WORTHY as he really is.

That’s what Paul means when he says, “Christ will be honored in my body ...” That word “honored” means **MAGNIFIED**—it carries the idea of a **telescope** ...

- *What does a telescope do?* It takes something that looks **small and far away** and shows you **how big it really is**.
  - A telescope doesn’t make stars bigger than they actually are; it just reveals how big they are and gives you a clearer picture of them
- **That’s what Paul wants his life to do:** Whether he lives or dies, whether he suffers in prison or walks out free to plant more churches, he wants people to look at him and say “*Jesus must be better than life, because this man still has courage, joy, and hope, even when death is on the table.*”
- His life acts as a telescope ... and what you have to realize is that YOURS DOES TOO. When people watch you walk through pain, disappointment, sickness, suffering, or loss, they’re not just watching how strong *you are*, **they’re watching how sufficient Jesus is to you.** And when you suffer with courage, when you grieve but still have hope, when you experience loss but you still don’t despair, your life becomes a telescope by which people see that Jesus—who might feel **small and far away**—is actually **bigger, better, and nearer** than they ever thought possible.

So what’s Paul’s secret to this? How do you get a life that makes Jesus look big **no matter what you’re going through**? Well, Paul rounds out chapter 1 by giving us three secrets to the good life ...

## Three Secrets to the Good Life

### 1) When Christ is your life, death becomes gain (vv 19–21)

Here it is, Paul's secret to the good life: <sup>21</sup>For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

That right there is what it means to be a Christian: It's all about Christ.

- To **live** is Christ. Everything is bound up in Christ. Every **thought** is Christ. Every **motive** is Christ. Every **action** and **deed** is Christ: *Will this honor Christ? Is this how Christ would respond? Does this follow what Christ has said?*
- “To live is Christ” is St. Patrick's famous prayer:

*Christ **with** me,  
Christ **before** me,  
Christ **behind** me,  
Christ **in** me,  
Christ **beneath** me,  
Christ **above** me,  
Christ on my **right**,  
Christ on my **left**,  
Christ when I **lie down**,  
Christ when I **sit down**,  
Christ when I **arise**,  
Christ in the heart of every man who **thinks** of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who **speaks** of me,  
Christ in every eye that **sees** me,  
Christ in every ear that **hears** me.*

If you call yourself a Christian, Christ isn't someone you give honor to one day a week for a couple hours. For the Christian, to live is Christ! That's the OS of the Christian life. **Philippians 1:21 is THE secret to the GOOD LIFE. The good life is KNOWING JESUS.**

- It's not **comfort**, or **control**, or **success**, or **pleasure**, or **escaping suffering**, or building the **perfect family**, **career**, **bank account**, or **reputation**. LIFE IS CHRIST.

- And if Christ is your life, then death—death is not the end; it's not defeat; it's not ultimate loss—DEATH IS GAIN, cuz you get to be WITH CHRIST.

And if you get those two things settled—life and death—it changes everything: **Harold at NDC...**

- **OWLS — Potluck PIC**
- **Gus:** *Nobody stopped eating. "Grab yourself a plate, Pastor."*
- **Judy:** *We know who's in control and we know who is holding Harold in his hands. We're good no matter what happens.*
  - (Gus: *Gonna be hard to get ppl to come speak now ...*)

Harold and Judy know Paul's secret: **When Christ is your life, death is gain!** The grave isn't the end; it's the beginning.

- The world doesn't have this hope, cuz it either has to a) **deny** death and try to **ignore** it or b) be **crushed** by the reality of it.
- But because of the resurrection of Christ, when you are found in Jesus, death isn't **tragedy**; it's **triumph**: *O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*

**Lemme ask you: Do you have THAT kind of resolve/joy/hope in the face of death?**

- If you don't, I'm pleading with you: **Turn from your sin, place your faith in Jesus, and live forever with him.**
- **John 11:25**, Jesus says, **"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"**

Apart from Christ, death is an executioner. Death comes to take everything from you. Your body. Your plans. Your relationships. Your future. Your control. Your ETERNITY.

- But because of the resurrection of Jesus, death is no longer an executioner for the Christian—death's been demoted. Death has lost its keys. Death has been stripped of its sting.
- **If you are in Christ, death isn't the Grim Reaper; he's just a gardener**—all death can do is plant you. And if your life is buried in Christ, then death does not bury you in defeat; it plants you in hope. It puts your body in the ground like a seed, waiting for the day when Christ raises you imperishable, glorious, and whole.

When you can finally say with Paul, **"To die is GAIN,"** then and only then are you finally free to live.

- LISTEN: **You will never be ready to live until you are ready to die.**
- When Christ is your life, death becomes gain.

Here's the question: **How would you, right now, fill in those blanks?** For to me to live is \_\_\_\_\_, and to die is \_\_\_\_\_.

- Whatever you put in the **first** blank determines what goes in the **second**...
  - If to live is **money**, then to die is to **lose it all**.
  - If to live is **popularity**, then to die is to **be forgotten**.
  - If to live is **family**, then to die is **separation**.
  - If to live is **control**, then dying is the **ultimate nightmare of which you have NO control over**.

But if to live is CHRIST, then to die is GAIN. That's the only equation that doesn't break.

## 2) When death is gain, life becomes mission (vv 22–26)

Paul is ready to die, but that doesn't make him *detached* from life ... it actually makes him *more useful* in life. Look at v 22: **22If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.**

That phrase is so important. Paul doesn't say, "If I keep living, that means more **comfort** for me. More time to **chase my dreams, build my kingdom, check off my bucket list.**"

- He says, "If I stay alive, there must still be **fruitful labor** for me!"
- That's the Christian view of life: If God leaves breath in your lungs, it is not because you still have a few more **episodes to stream**, a few more **vacations to take**, a few more **achievements to collect**. It means there is still **fruitful labor** for you to do. In other words, **if death is gain, then life becomes an assignment.**

Or, as we like to say, **if you're not dead, God's not done!**

- If you woke up this morning, it's because God has left purpose in your life.
- You may not know what it is, you may not feel **impressive**, you may not feel especially **qualified**—you may feel too **young**, or too **old**, or too **tired**, or too **ordinary**, or too **wounded** or **messy** or **behind** or **broken** or too **late** ... but Paul would say: *If your flesh is still breathing, there's fruitful labor for you.*
- **You have a mission because Jesus is alive, the gospel is true, the Spirit of God lives in you, and God has put you exactly where you are to be salt + light, and an ambassador of Christ.**
  - Whether it's your home, dorm, workplace, neighborhood, friend group, classroom—wherever it is, God has placed you there ON purpose FOR a purpose.
  - Your life isn't just **survival**; it's **assignment!**

But Paul is still torn: **Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.** <sup>23</sup>**I am hard pressed between the two.** (Hard pressed: like two walls closing in) **My desire** (*my strong affection; my intense longing; the burning passion in my heart*) **is to depart and be with Christ** (**depart** is the image of a ship tied to the dock, but then a sailor loosens the rope, releasing the ship from the dock<sup>1</sup>), **for that is far better.**

Being with Christ is not **slightly** better, or **marginally** better; it's FAR BETTER. In the Greek, Paul literally says it's "**very much better.**"

- As my wife and I approach our 40s (with all of the fun physical things that come with 40), we're starting to resonate with this more and more—plug one leak and another springs: *Lord, take me now. It'd be so much better to be with you!*

Paul would much rather depart and be with Christ: FAR BETTER. <sup>24</sup>**But** for the sake of the Philippians and others like them—for the spiritual good of the church, Paul says, **to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.** <sup>25</sup>**Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith ...**

Paul is stuck between what is "**very much better**" for him and what is "**more necessary**" for others. **You parents understand this instinctively, right?: There's a ton of things that would be very much better for you as an individual were it not for your kids, amen?**

- Uninterrupted sleep—*very much better*
- Eating a hot meal *while it's still hot* or not having to reheat your coffee four times—very much better
- Going to the bathroom without someone sliding a drawing under the door like they're passing you CIA secrets—VERY MUCH BETTER.
- Adult conversations that don't include sentences like, "*Stop touching each other. Put your pants back on. Wipe your own butt.*" —VERY MUCH BETTER.

**But, see, LOVE asks a different question:** *Not simply, "What would be better for ME?" but "What is more necessary for THEM?"*

- Here's the principle: **Love prioritizes what is more necessary for others over what is very much better for me.**
- That's not just parenting; that's Christianity.
- That is what **mission-minded love** does. It doesn't ask first, "*What would make my life easier?*" It asks, "*What would help others get to know and find joy in Jesus?*"
- It's a love that's willing to be **inconvenienced** if it means someone else gets **strengthened**.
- It's love that says, "It'd be much easier for me to **leave**, or to **quit**, or to **check out** ... but somebody still needs my faithfulness."

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<sup>1</sup> Or of soldiers who were ready to break camp in order to move on to the next destination: they'd loosen the tent ropes and pull up the stakes in order to move on from this world. What a picture of Christian death! The "tent" we live in is taken down at death, and the spirit goes home to be with Christ in heaven, 2 Cor. 5:1–8 tells us.

- Love postpones **personal preference** for **gospel purpose**, because it **prioritizes what is MORE NECESSARY for others over what is VERY MUCH BETTER for me.**

So, Paul says, *if God leaves me here, it's not cuz heaven isn't better than this place ... it's cuz helping others find joy in Jesus still matters.* And what he hopes to see is this: <sup>26</sup>so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

<sup>27</sup>Only (This is the hinge. After all that reflection on his own future, Paul turns and says, *“Whatever happens to ME, this is what must happen in YOU.”*) let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ,

The most important weapon against the Enemy is not a powerful sermon, podcast, or book ... it's the **consistent life** of believers who are walking by the Holy Spirit.

**Worthy here** doesn't mean “deserving”; it means **a right response to the gospel.** None of us are “deserving” in light of our sin ...

- **Romans 3:23, ALL have sinned ...**
- **Romans 6:23, The WAGES of sin is death ...**
- **Romans 5:8, God demonstrated his love ...**
- **Romans 10:9, Confess + Believe “Jesus is Lord”**
- **Romans 10:13, Everyone who calls ... will be saved!**

In light of THAT GRACE—in light of THAT GOSPEL GOOD NEWS—in light of how Christ **saved your life** and **what he had to do to save it**, let your manner of life be worthy of THAT gospel. Live a life worthy of THAT gospel.

- It looks like a life of **holiness even when nobody is watching.**
- It looks like **telling the truth** when it'd be much easier to lie.
- It looks like **generosity** that doesn't make sense to the world.
- It looks like **forgiving someone** who doesn't deserve it. Not cuz what they did was small, but cuz what Christ forgave you of was so large!

Here's the question: *Is what you're living for worth Christ dying for?*

Then chapter 1 ends with this: so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup>and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their

destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. <sup>29</sup>For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should **not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,** <sup>30</sup>engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

- NLT: For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also **the privilege of suffering for him.**

When Christ is your life, death becomes gain.

When death becomes gain, you can live life freely on mission.

**And when life is mission, you need not fear suffering, because it's worth it.**

### **3) When life is mission, suffering becomes worth it (vv 27–30)**

We've shared the story of missionary **Jim Elliot** multiple times:

- 1 of 5 missionaries killed in 1956 trying to reach the Huaorani people of Ecuador.
- He's the guy who wrote the famous line: ***"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."***

Three years after he was murdered, his widow, **Elizabeth**, and her **3-year-old daughter** decided they'd return to the Huaoranis and evangelize the very people who killed her husband.

- And people thought she was INSANE. You know why? CUZ SHE IS! In the world's eyes, this is the dumbest thing she could do.
- **But she's playing according to a different set of rules.** She saw life as mission, so any suffering that comes with it would be worth it. She's not playing by the American rules. Our #1 rule is what? *Be safe. Be careful. Don't do anything uncomfortable.*

As she's packing up, she writes a letter, and in it says this: ***"I ask you to pray for [the Huaronai people], and for us as we go—that the name of the Lord may be exalted. I would like to repeat what I have said to several when they knew of my intention to enter the tribe. I would never go because I thought it would be safe, or even to carry on my husband's work. There is one reason alone. I believe it is simply the next step. It is the thing required at the moment."***

- ***It is simply the next step ... the thing required at the moment.***

## **CONCLUSION (VAMP)**

**Friend, what is your NEXT STEP? What is the thing God is requiring of you this very moment?**

- For some of you, it's the call to follow Jesus—to COME AND DIE ... to die to yourself, take yourself off the throne, and to place Jesus on the throne.

- It's the call to **take up your cross and follow him** ... not to make your life better, but because he's better than life.
- **You will never be ready to live until you are ready to die.**

**Are you ready to die?**

1. *Scale of 1–10, how certain you would go to heaven?*
2. *Standing at gates, God asks why he should let you in.*

Tickets to Canes playoff game ...

- Why let you in? I have *tickets*.
- You pay for them? *They were a GIFT.*

First act of suffering: Lay down your life, take up your cross, and follow Christ.

- No heads bowed. No eyes closed. Walk this aisle and give your life to Christ.
- It's gonna feel like suffering ... but that's what we're called to.

For everyone else: Whatever you've been putting in that blank (*To live is \_\_\_\_\_*), it's time to lay it down. Come and lay it at the altar.

[Response Song: *To The Lamb*]