

Read Philippians 1:12-26

I. Introduction

- *What is Christianity?*
 - Both morality and Church affiliation are not central to Christianity nor participation in the Church. Christ is central to Christianity. He is the distinguishing factor of Christianity. So if you remove Christ and Him crucified from the equation then you no longer have Christianity.
 - As we read Philippians, we see that truth is affirmed over and over again. We also perceive that knowing that truth changed the way Paul and Christians in Philippi lived. If Christ is central to Christianity then he is central to my life. *What does this mean?*
 - “Every aspect of our present, bodily, earthly existence is completely permeated by Christ.” Say what!?!
 - **Illustration:** Permeable vs stain/water blocker
 - The verb permeate literally means to “pass through.” It’s often used to describe smells or liquids that not only pass through, but also spread to fill an entire area.
 - In science class, you might have learned about a permeable membrane. A permeable membrane is a thin material that is porous enough to let liquids or gases to pass through.
 - “The purpose of living is pressing forward to know and serve Christ each day.”
 - I am preoccupied with Christ
 - *What is central to your life? What are you preoccupied by? What motivates your decision making?*
 - *Where is life found?*
 - Life is found in Christ. Life is even in death because life comes through fellowship with Christ. Either way I belong to Christ because where He is life is hence death is gain. Death is gain because we will fully experience fellowship with Christ upon death.
 - So Paul says “while I am alive I experience real life in connection with Christ; with death comes life in all fullness in the presence of Jesus.”
 - *Is Paul teaching perfection for the Christian life?*
 - He is not speaking of perfection. This is a goal of Paul’s life. Consider what he says in **3:12-14**
 - So the christian life is a dynamic process of becoming and growing in Christ.

II. Lesson

- I think the message of **verse 21** sums our section up well:
“For me, to live—Christ; to die—gain.”
- Christ was a singular passion for Paul. That’s why he could state **verse 21**. Either way, life or death, Paul belonged to Christ.
- Consider **Galatians 2:20** (“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”)
 - Life:
 - **Faith in Christ:**

- **Consider Galatians 2:20** ("I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.")
- Do not pervert the gospel to be someone or something other than Christ. Christianity is faith in Christ and Christ alone. Are you trusting in Christ for your salvation?
- **Fellowship with Christ:**
 - **Consider 1 John 1:3-4**
 - Faith in Christ is very much so personal. Fellowship with Christ must be cultivated because fellowship with Christ brings joy in life and suffering.
 - Even though you believe the correct beliefs, if you lack joy then something may be keeping you from him. What can it be?
- **Following after Christ:**
 - Consider the call to Jesus' disciples
 - Follow me:
 - First you must forsake all that is keeping you from him. Die to sin and selfish ambitions. Consider again **Galatians 2:20**. My life is not my own. My life is Christ's life.
 - Of course this is a continual process that's why we characterize life as faith and repentance.
 - This is hard work. Bearing one's cross is hard work. Living for Christ is hard work
 - Joy is synonymous with life in Philippians:
 - "Joy requires work to maintain it because finding joy in Christ is a "fight against every impulse for alien joys and every obstacle in the way to seeing and savoring Christ."- John Piper
- **Death:**
 - To die is to depart and be with Christ in the fullest. Death no longer has a sting because Christ defeated by His resurrection.
 - This is not a plea to be removed from the trials and sufferings of this life nor a dissatisfaction with life.
 - Understanding Paul's situation as one waiting trial, "this is a forth-thought assessment of one whose future in terms of life in the flesh is uncertain but whose ultimate future is both certain and to be desired."

III. Now What?

- "When the goal of living is Christ, then living inevitably follows the way of Christ, the way of self-giving, self-humbling, and self-sacrifice."
- Consider **2:5-8**
- Where are opportunities for self-giving, self-humbling, and self-sacrifice in your life?
- Consider again **3:12-14** Christ thus became the singular pursuit of his life. What does a singular pursuit look like?
- Remember Christian life is a dynamic process of becoming and growing in Christ so it is a life of faith and repentance.