



SERIES: Philippians (May / June)

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Thursday, May 13, 2021

Scripture: Philippians 1:21-22

TITLE: Which Is Better, Life Or Death?

Which is better? Living or death? I suppose that might depend on what kind of life you lead, or what kind of death you face. A life of torture might sound worse than a quick death in your sleep. A life of luxury might sound better than a slow and painful death. But what if it didn't matter what kind of life you lived, or death you faced for that matter? But rather, what motivated how you live, and even how you die? That was Paul's strategy. What do I mean? Let's listen to the Apostle Paul in Philippians 1:

"For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. ²² But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So, I really don't know which is better." (Phil. 1:21-22, NLT)

Paul's words seem like pure foolishness, don't they? He says, "I don't know what's better. To live means being a slave for Christ, but death sounds so good!"

Paul knew prestige, influence, resources, and pedigree, but he was willing to give it all up to be a slave to Christ. He traded influence for shipwrecks. He traded pedigree for humiliation. He traded resources for prison. Yet, Paul could say, "For to me, living means living for Christ. I can do more fruitful work." So living as a slave of Christ was a life to desire and pursue.

On the flip side, Paul said, but to die, that sounds even better! And Paul wasn't stupid or naïve. Paul wasn't the Norman Vincent Peale of his day, who thought that thinking positively meant a positive outcome. Paul knew death would not be pretty. But what awaited him on the other side was worth it all.

It's like when my wife and I travel. We love to be together, but we also long to be home with our boys. Both are enjoyable, but to be reunited is a strong desire. But Paul's desire was truly to be in God's will. Whatever God wanted, whether a life of service, or death and reunion, he would be obedient.

Some people have said you can be too heavenly minded to be any earthly good. In my experience, we are far too earthly minded to be any heavenly good. We are called to be confident in Christ - so much so, we live intentionally for a heavenly purpose, no matter what hardship or opportunity we face.

So here's my challenge for you today: make a course correction. Many of us, myself included, are so focused on me, my desires, or the desires of my family, that I've taken my eye off the will of God. I am selfish with my time, talents, and treasures, but that shows confidence in my stuff,

and not on Christ. I want to live like Paul. I want to live intentionally for the sake of Christ, and long for heaven with Him.

So take time today and remove the distractions that keep you from living a life on purpose, for a purpose. When we do this, we will live as Paul lived, and as Christ called us. Truly we will say, “to live is Christ and to die is gain”.