

“You. Will. Die.”

Scripture: Philippians 1:21-30

Graphic: baptism, death, water, suffering, joy

Key Verses: Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...

Theme: Being an active, baptized member of the body of Christ means you have the privilege to have died and are now living in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

1) Introduction

- a) Let's pray!
- b) Philippians Chapter 1...turn there with me.
- c) Paul and Timothy are in a Roman prison...chained to a cold, dark, WALL... they got arrested and thrown in jail because they wouldn't stop talking about Jesus Christ. They had no idea whether they would live or die in that place.
- d) And you would think that in that STATE, they would be like, “Woe is us...we're hungry...we're tired...this floor is cold...we don't have a cloak to put on... the internet isn't working... no cable TV”
- e) Not Paul! Even though he was in prison, chained to a wall, he wanted to write this letter to his church in Philippi, in Europe...a church they started when they were on their second missionary journey.
- f) Basically, in the first part of the letter, (and this is my paraphrase) he says, “Greetings from prison! I remember you often...I pray for you...I love you all! I'm filled with JOY because I think about you! My heart's desire is to not be in this stinky prison, but to be with you so we can talk about Jesus and tell other people about Him!”
- g) “However, check this out church, because we ARE here right now, we get to witness to the Roman guards that stand outside the door. We get to tell the other prisoners about Jesus and about you. We have a job to do and we're passionate about proclaiming the truth about Jesus and letting EVERYONE ELSE know, no matter where we are.”
- h) Chains? Bars? Fear? Cold? Rejection? Who cares, the gospel of Jesus Christ is more important than my own life!
- i) When you come to a point as a Christian when you realize that the gospel of Jesus Christ is more important than your own LIFE, then you are on the road

to living in a manner worthy of that gospel... living in a manner worthy of the death that you claimed at your baptism.

- j) Paul fully expected that whatever he did, wherever he was, that Christ would be exalted through him, even to the point of whether he ended up living or dying.
- k) Because...look at Verse 21...

2) Scripture

a) Read verse 21

- i) We have two option in life...either we can live or we can die!
- ii) Paul is sitting in a Roman prison, in chains, dreaming about being with Jesus Christ. There are times in our lives when we daydream about being with Christ.
- iii) And the most profound moments when we do that are when we are in a terrible situation...we have cancer...we are broken and hurting...
- iv) Heck, even on our good days, if we stop and think about being with Christ, we would all sort of agree that THAT would be something awesome (in every sense of that word!)
- v) And Paul is not just wanting to die (although we can't blame him)...he's remembering and living into the promise that Jesus gave to us when he said, "Those who believe in me will never die, but will have eternal life..." And the reason Jesus said that is because He died...and HE rose again...and HE is living today!
- vi) Dying is at the heart of the gospel, followed by resurrection. We wouldn't have hope in eternal life if it hadn't been for death. We wouldn't have a promise for eternity if it wasn't for a loving God who offers eternal life to us through the sacrifice of Jesus.
- vii) But Paul, wakes up from his daydreaming and writes...(verse 22)

b) Read verses 22-26

- i) Here's the logic: Paul says, if I DIE, I get to be with Christ, which is better...no wait...is FAR better! Than what? Than living! Paul knows

- that dying in that prison would be something far better than having to live in it, witness through it, or be ready to be released FROM it.
- ii) Whatever chains us down in our lives are the things from which we will be liberated when it's God time for us. We don't know what that time is...we can't force it...and we have live in Christ until that moment comes for us.
 - iii) Paul then argues that to remain in the flesh (to keep living) is to engage in fruitful labor for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to BE THERE for the believers in Philippi.
 - iv) And so he decides that living is alright, because he gets to still be the leader of this thing that God has chosen him to do, and gets to lead the people in the churches of Jesus Christ.
 - v) Dying (while we are living) means being with Christ...a heavenly promise
 - vi) Living (by dying for Christ) means being with the ones we love and getting to live life as a Christian, following his will for our lives.
 - vii) Paul is convinced that they need him...they need his guidance, prayers, love, they need him to live out his calling as the Apostle of Jesus Christ.
 - viii) He is sure that the Holy Spirit is telling him that he can expect to share abundantly in their boasting in Christ, when they see each other.
 - ix) He thinking of the party that will take place when he gets released from prison and allowed to go back to Europe and see them! ...a reunion for the sake of Christ!
 - x) I bet many of us had family reunions this summer...times of joy and maybe a little shaking of the head because of Uncle Bob the vegetarian and Cousin Phil the redneck.
 - xi) Paul is dreaming about the day when they can see each other...
 - xii) And he has no idea when that might be, IF AT ALL...but it's what is keeping his mind on the positive...on Christ working in THEIR lives and in His and Timothy's.

xiii) SO in the meantime...do this one thing!

c) Read verses 27-28

- i) Live your life (community...church) Live your lives a manner WORTHY of the gospel of Jesus Christ! And when you do that, I will know you have three critical characteristics:
 - (1) You are standing firm in one spirit
 - (2) You are striving side-by-side with one mind for the faith
 - (3) You are not intimidated by your opponents...
- ii) If the believers in Philippi would live in a manner worthy of the Good News about Jesus Christ...if they would live their lives as people who fully understood the sacrificial significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for sin and restoration, then they would do NOTHING else than stand firm, work together, and not be afraid.
- iii) The idea of standing firm reminds me of standing with feet apart, muscles kind of rigid, ready to take some kind of assault. Standing firm in ONE SPIRIT means all knowing FOR WHAT we are standing firm.
- iv) We don't simply stand firm from some random attack. We stand firm in defense of the gospel of Jesus Christ...the hope, faith, and love that we have received from God.
- v) So many of the Christian churches in this country have failed to stand firm in what the scriptures say about holiness, purity, sin, and the Orthodox faith of the Apostles. We must stand firm in the Holy Spirit together, arms joined, resolute to defend our faith.
- vi) And there are times to stand firm and go no further backward. But if we are going backwards, and if we're always standing still, then we will never move the Kingdom of God outward.
- vii) So the other side of that is we can't just be standing still defending the faith. We have to be actively advancing the Kingdom of God through our efforts to love those around us in the church and in the world.

- viii) Again, we are called to UNITY in the essentials so we can be effectively communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world that is increasingly lost and wandering away from God.
- ix) And some will listen and come to Christ and others will reject that message and become an opponent to Him. Remember that when you share the Good News and someone rejects it, they aren't rejecting you – if you've done that with love for the other person's eternal salvation – they are rejecting Christ...rejecting His love.
- x) But look at what Paul says about this...DO NOT, IN ANY WAY, BE INTIMIDATED BY YOUR OPPONENTS. Do not be INTIMIDATED by anyone, any power, any authority, and force of evil, or anything else that would oppose you, because that opposition is not to YOU, it is to JESUS CHRIST. Don't ever forget that...
- xi) And here's the promise...For them (your opponents), this (the evidence of life lived worthy) is evidence of their destruction...evidence of your salvation.
- xii) The evidence of Paul's salvation was the fact that he was passionate and driven to share the message about Jesus even while in prison for doing it.
- xiii) This is God's doing...not ours. And the evidence of our lives lived for the gospel of Jesus Christ, above all else including our lives, is evidence that evil will be defeated, and Almighty God wins in the end...all because of love.
- xiv) ALL of this, is what God did, is doing, and will do...we just get to be part OF IT...

d) Read verses 29-30

- i) God has graciously granted each one of us the privilege to believe in Him.
- ii) That is one of the most amazing statements that Paul makes! We aren't entitled to believe...we aren't defaulted into believing...we are forced to, coerced into, or even tricked into believing.
- iii) God has given us the privilege of receiving the gift of belief...of faith.

- iv) Doesn't that sort of change our perspective on faith...it's a privilege...not a right.
- v) BUT...with the privilege of faith, comes the PRIVILEGE of suffering.
- vi) Paul knew this...HE was sitting in prison, thankful that he was in chains because of Jesus! He was THANKFUL!
- vii) How many times in the past year have you honestly been thankful because of your faith in Jesus Christ AND the suffering that it can cause?
- viii) Paul was out there looking for trouble...and he was thankful when he found it. I think the Christian church would do itself a huge favor if it stopped being so tied up in internal garbage and starting going out to look for trouble...THEN, when the world puts us in a cultural prison for standing firm, striving together, and being unashamed, we could be THANKFUL for the privilege of suffering for Jesus!

3) Application

- a) And it all starts with the people of God, rising up to professing our faith...live into our baptisms...becoming active members of a church...studying the Bible...praying for others...worshipping - these are all statements about who you are in Christ.
- b) If you did none of that, it would be hard for people to know you were in any way a follower of Jesus.
- c) Live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ...
 - i) Stand firm in One spirit...don't all do the same thing, but use our many gifts to serve one Spirit, one Lord
 - ii) Strive together, side-by-side, with one mind (mission and kingdom building); and
 - iii) Together, do not be afraid of those that oppose you...

4) Conclusion

- a) When you come to a point as a Christian when you realize that the gospel of Jesus Christ, the privilege to believe and the suffering that will come, is more important than my own LIFE, then you are on the road to living in a

manner worthy of that gospel... living in a manner worthy of the death that you claimed at your baptism.

- b) If that's not where you are today, then be actively seeking Jesus in your life and move toward it.
- c) This is an awesome day in the life of the church! I reserve that word, AWESOME, for times like this when we, as a church, can stand in AWE of the ways that God is working in real and visible ways in our lives.
- d) Six adults will become professing members of the church today. That's AWESOME! We should be bursting with joy! Not because we get to add some names to a piece of paper that lists all the other people who have become members of the church, but because we can celebrate what fact that in this community, people's lives are being transformed and strengthened because of the commitment we have to the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- e) This is an indication that these people are on the road to living in a manner worthy of the gospel...
- f) The gospel is about death and resurrection...we die to ourselves and live for Christ.
- g) Baptism is our way of publically confessing that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the most important thing in my life. We will hear the testimonies of all the people that will come up here in a couple minutes...
- h) Four have been baptized and today, will remember their baptisms and profess their faith in Jesus Christ here. Two will enter those waters for the first time...they will go down into the water of baptism and die, and when they come UP from those waters, they will be more alive than ever before.
- i) Each one of us here today, baptized or not, is being led by the Holy Spirit to live into our willingness to die for the sake of Christ. If you have not been baptized, and you are just about ready to jump out of your seat and into that water, then this is your day to die to the way it has been and live into God's future together with every other person here today who has been baptized.
- j) For all who have been baptized, today is an important milestone in your life because you will remember what that means to you. And let me just speak for a minute to those who were baptized as infants: Don't ever feel like you have somehow had less of an experience of baptism than anyone else.

k) Paul reminded us in verse 28, THIS IS GOD'S DOING. Praise God that you had parents and a church family that brought you up in the faith. Today, as I baptized those who come, relive your baptism through them and celebrate your faith! Let's pray!