

Philippians 4 - To Live is Christ

1. Paul's concern

As we looked at Paul's conflict last week, we ended with his expectation that Christ would be glorified by his life *and* his death.

Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.

This leads us into Paul's next consideration that his life in Christ had an anchoring effect on him. We are should be regularly challenged by the focus that our mission in Christ should have on us. The problem for too many Christians is that they lack that anchor and that focus. They don't realize it but they are living by their appetite. They treat life like a smorgasbord: sometimes they have a taste for spirituality, sometimes a taste for carnality. Sometimes their track runs parallel to Christ's mission and they look like they are in sync with Him. But then they become distracted and veer off into temptation and its tribulation. We are reminded that

Jas 1:8 A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

2. Paul's confidence

Paul captured the essence of what should drive every believer in vs. 21

Phi 1:21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

Here, Paul states the case succinctly: his course is set with one goal in mind. His course is to follow Christ. His goal is to follow Him all the way not just *to* the end but *through* the end and beyond when he will receive his reward.

Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Gal 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Galatians 6:9 might be misinterpreted to mean that if we just stay at a task long enough we will be successful. That is an application we *could* make with a little caveat to go with it. That verse is not about simply persevering. What it is specifically referring to is how that if we persevere here on earth we will certainly receive our final reward when we are in glory.

You work hard all your life and what do you get in the end? Just a nursing home? Disrespect because you are older? NOOOO! You get heaven!!!!

Paul was so enthralled with the prospect of heaven that it presented a dilemma for him.

Phil 1:22-23 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

If you have the same perspective that Paul had, the fear of death disappears. People miss this and can have some measure of anxiety over death to the degree that their lives are spent chasing off after comfort and security while they are here. We can go boldly out into the world.

Are you afraid that you might get sick or shot if you go out? Sure, that's a possibility but it is also irrelevant. What are you saving yourself *for*? Are you saving yourself so you can serve God as long as it is easy? When you are focused on following Jesus *wherever* He leads then it *might just* lead you into *eternal* health and comfort. It reminds us of the

evangelist John R. Rice when someone threatened him with a gun. The gunman pointed the weapon at the preacher and said, "I'm going to blow your brains out". The reply was classic, "Son, you can't scare me with Heaven."

We cannot decide whether or not we will live or die; we can only decide what we will die for.

– Bob Pierce

3. Paul's commitment

When we have the right kind of concern and confidence we can have the right kind of commitment. Commitment is Paul's emphasis in our passage today. If someone were to ask about our commitment to Christ, we might prematurely respond that yes, indeed we agree and are "down with that." We might be down for Jesus but in our heart we are not up for doing anything about it.

Prov 20:6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

When it comes to Christian commitment, why is it that people have such difficulty? You can detect that when people resist the Gospel, what they are really resisting is the idea of commitment. They don't resist the idea of going to heaven. They don't resist the idea that there is a God. What many people fear is the demands they think God is going to make on them. When you simply invite them to church where they might have a chance to find out about God and going to heaven you so very quickly hear, "I'm so busy," "I can't make it because it is the only day I have to rest." "I can't make it now, but I will surprise you sometime when I show up." If you really want to surprise a preacher, come up with an excuse he hasn't heard before! What are people thinking? The fact of the matter is that people don't really use Sunday for rest. The world goes shopping, catches up on the

laundry, cleans out from partying on Friday and Saturday so they can go to work on Monday. People create obligations by creating routines. People don't realize it but when someone says, "Sunday is the only..." that he is revealing that he is an undisciplined person. After you hear this a few hundred times, you begin to get the clue that people are just making excuses, especially when you see the kinds of things they take on on Sunday.

The first thing that jumps to mind is the assumption that weekends are reserved for *us* as if all the rest of the week is spent in obligation to our job. This is a false distinction. Our lives are not made up of just work and leisure. People think that they have to jealously guard their non-working time. They are willing to be only be under obligation to a job. They can't be put under any obligation to anything else. They might *voluntarily* commit themselves, but don't try to suggest that they owe God anything Who can then lay a claim on their time. There have been numerous times when someone is approached to take on a role at church and their reaction was, "I can't commit because I will want to go different places, visit friends, etc., and I can't guarantee I will be there every Sunday." They don't want to commit to anything because they are planning to be missing and often unexpectedly.

N E W H Y M N A L
ANNOUNCED (Friday Church
News Notes, February 26, 2016,
w w w . w a y o f l i f e . o r g ,
f b n s @ w a y o f l i f e . o r g ,
866-295-4143) - Leaders of the
American Evangelical Laodicean
Church last week announced the
publication of a new hymnal.
“This collection of hymns really
captures the essence of our
tradition,” said Presiding Bishop
Luke W. Armm. “People in
t o d a y ’ s s o c i e t y g e t
uncomfortable with too much
talk about commitment and
dedication.” he continued. Here

is a listing of some of the selections found in this hymnal: "I Surrender Some," "My Hope is Built on Nothing Much," "O For a Couple Tongues to Sing," "Onward Christian Reservists," "Take My Life and Let Me Be," "Where He Leads Me, I will Consider Following," "Be Thou My Hobby."

People look at you like you are crazy if you say, "Well, of *course* you will be able to miss when you go on vacation!" The correct implication is that they can't miss the other times. This might be starting to sound a little scary, but the reality is that there is actually no such thing as *me* time if you are a Christian. Remember what Paul started off with, "For me to live is Christ." Before someone is tempted to speak too quickly and walk away from Christ because of the demands they fear, be assured that God is still the God of the Sabbath. He is the God of rest and vacations. He even created a whole commandment and system of feasts just for that.

What we are given is a stewardship. Man was given stewardship of the earth to manage it and not destroy it. We were all given a stewardship of time, which includes time for relaxation *and* vacation, praise God.

Mark 2:27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

Isn't it ironic that the one thing you are *not* supposed to do on *Labor Day* is to do labor? God gave the Sabbath for man's benefit. Being the God of vacations does not mean that we should overdo our rest and relaxation. In our stewardship of the time that God has give us on this earth, we need to make sure to do order our lives with the proper priorities. Paul spoke of God and His sense of orderliness when he instructed the Corinthians:

1Cor 14:40 Let all things be done

decently and in order.

People try to shield themselves from any discomfort. This is impossible to begin with. They might avoid serving God and then suffer when trials come because they had not prepared and fortified themselves with Christian service. What we *can* do is *manage* our discomfort. That's what stewardship is. People *sometimes* will take on a job but only with all kinds of stipulations to insulate themselves. This problem is something we have come to recognize for successful ministry and life. You have to be able to *roll* with what is delivered your way. Respond with the resourcefulness that you have accrued by studying and serving.

Knowing your limitations is *also* part of the stewardship of time.

Matt 5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

That doesn't mean that you stay *firmly* committed to doing only things that are convenient for you. In our stewardship it means that we set our course according to what can *actually* be done. Don't *overly* commit. Be careful in not *overly* committing that you end up *failing* to commit *at all*!

Jas 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

1Cor 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

One of the biggest obstacles to planning any work, secular or sacred, is not being able to count on someone. We leave the success to God. When we someone does not give in to our challenge to get saved, it is not *we* who failed. It is not *God* who failed. It *is* the failure of the unrepentant sinner to accept the Gospel. We have to be faithful to have delivered the Gospel, but the

success of the Gospel depends on the heart of person who needs to receive the Gospel.

As long as we treat ourselves as if we were customers coming to receive the services we have paid for (or not!), we cannot expect to see God's blessings on our work.

It is not as though everyone needs to do nothing but go to church 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Col 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Paul doesn't specify exactly *which* things to do here. Serving God might not mean 24/7 *at church* (although some *should* do more than they *are* doing), but the challenge is to manage *all* responsibilities of secular *and* sacred work *and* family *and* rest for God.

In recent years a head coach divorced his wife of 26 years when he left coaching a college team to become head coach in the National Football League. He said he needed a wife while coaching on the college level for social functions and to show families that he would be looking out for their sons. In pro football, however, she was an unnecessary accouterment and a distraction to winning. He said winning football was his number one priority and his two sons second. How tragic!

In contrast to this, Tom Landry, former coach of the Dallas cowboys said, "The thrill of knowing Jesus is the greatest thing that ever happened to me ... I think God has put me in a very special place, and He expects me to use it to His glory in everything I do ... whether coaching football or talking to the press, I'm always a Christian ... Christ is first, family second

and football third."

– Source Unknown

If you are a child of God, ask yourself, "What is my role in God's work? Can I be counted on?" Am I managing all my responsibilities of my job, my spiritual work, *and* my rest?

Paul closes with this thought:

Phi 1:27-30 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

28And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

29For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

If you are not a child of God, are you avoiding Him and responding to the Gospel because of what it means to be a follower of Christ? Don't think you are sparing yourself of any trouble. You will have the trouble that a Godless life will bring and then on top of that you end up in Hell. Admit to God that you are a sinner and need to make your peace with Him through Christ's blood sacrifice for you on the cross. Be confident that God will bless you in your work *and* in your rest.

1. Paul's concern Phil 1:20, Jas 1:8
2. Paul's confidence Phi 1:21, Rom 8:18, Gal 6:9, Phil 1:22-23
3. Paul's commitment Prov 20:6, Mark 2:27, 1Cor 14:40, Matt 5:37, Jas 4:17, 1Cor 4:2, Col 3:17, Phi 1:27-30