**BCM Bible Study: January 30/31, 2019**

**Philippians 1:12-26: To Live is Christ**

Last week we introduced an important theme in Philippians: **Devotion**. We said that living a life of devotion means being a servant of God, profoundly committed to serving His interests, even to the detriment of our own self interests. Today, we will see how taking on the mindset of a servant of God impacts Paul’s actions and attitude.

The Surpassing Importance of the Gospel: **Read Philippians 1:12-18a**

* Remember that Paul is writing from prison. What has resulted from his imprisonment?
* Why would Paul’s imprisonment have sparked boldness amongst the believers?
	+ “One might suppose that his imprisonment would have dampened any evangelizing efforts, but exactly the opposite was true. They drew from Paul’s example and laid their fears aside.” (Expositor’s Bible Commentary – in BCM library)
* In verses 15-17, Paul is referencing some people who are preaching the gospel with misplaced motivations. It seems that they are personally at odds with Paul, because they think of proclaiming the gospel as something for personal advancement, and thus imagine that their efforts are in some ways competitive with Paul’s.
	+ What is Paul’s response to these self-promoting gospel preachers? In what ways is that surprising to you?
* Paul is not saying that selfish ambition is a good thing (see Phil. 2:3), but overall, he is primarily concerned with the advancement of the gospel, whether it meant personal trials, insults, or his name being slandered. Consider this quote: “As long as the antagonism was **only personal**, Paul could rejoice that the greater purpose of disseminating the gospel was being served.” (Expositor’s Bible) This is a shocking statement for our culture where personal affronts are perhaps the most unforgivable insult.
* Consider how you might respond in these situations that Paul has described:
	+ When tough things happen, do you tend to shrink away from faith or feel more emboldened?
	+ How are you tempted to respond when you sense that people are using the gospel as a platform for self-promotion?
	+ How do you feel and react when others speak negatively about you or do something that hurts you?
		- What does your response to these two questions reveal about your own heart and priorities?
	+ Who do you know that emulates Paul’s attitude and character/is one of your heroes in the faith? – What about that person is admirable?
		- What would it look like if you were to emulate that person for the sake of the gospel?

To Live is Christ: **Read Philippians 1:18b-26**

* Notice in verse 19 that Paul is confident in deliverance, but in the following verse he says that he knows that he may live or die. What kind of deliverance is Paul hoping for?
	+ The Greek word for “deliverance” could mean deliverance from prison or deliverance in the ultimate sense of eternal salvation. It seems likely that Paul intentionally left some ambiguity here. (ESV Study Bible)
* From this difficult circumstance of being in prison, he declares that “to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” How does Paul’s **devotion** to Christ impact how he views his own life or death?
	+ Look again at vv.24-26. For what reason does Paul say that he wants to live?
* How does Paul’s assurance of eternal deliverance diminish his concern about what may happen to him during his life?
	+ In what way are you currently hoping for “deliverance,” whether that be from a bad situation, physical ailment, general worry, etc.?
	+ Our troublesome life circumstances do not go unnoticed by God – he exhibits special care for the meek and brokenhearted. It is not inherently selfish to seek personal deliverance; it is a part of our innate yearning for the restoration of God’s good design. At the same time, Scripture points to the hope of eternity with Christ that can bring us peace in all situations.
		- **Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.** How could the hope of the gospel bring peace and hope to your life?
* Not only does the gospel bring us peace, it empowers us to live entirely **devoted** to God’s mission of making disciples. Paul demonstrates this outlook beautifully: he seeks deliverance *for the purpose of* glorifying God with his life.
	+ In addition to bringing peace and hope to your life, how could the hope of eternal deliverance free you to live, like Paul, a life **devoted** to God’s purposes?

**Closing Thought:** A resounding theme of Phil. 1:12-26 is the selfish nature of the human heart that will inevitably work against God’s purposes. Even our hopes for deliverance can be entirely motivated by selfishness. (i.e. if Paul wanted deliverance only so that he could be more comfortable).

* What have you discovered tonight about the state of your own heart?
* What can you do this week that is focused solely on the good of someone else?

**Tangent Alert:** In verse 22, Paul seems to be contemplating the choice between life and death. The question is – is he actually thinking about *choosing* death? What does that mean? For one thing, we must recognize that Paul is undergoing great phycological torment – the verb for “I am hard pressed” tells us this. But we also must consider that in v.25 he says that he *knows* that he will remain. In light of this, I find this to be the best explanation: “Paul is laying bare his soul and frankly admitting a certain embarrassment: he acknowledges feeling a tension—a trying, and perhaps almost unbearable, tension—between personal desire (v.23) and Christian duty (v.24).” (Silva, *Philippians*) Pauline theology does not leave room for taking his own life for many reasons, fundamental of them being the divine authorship of life. The reason he appeals to here is his surpassing duty to be Christ’s servant. In essence, he is saying, “Life is very hard right now, and in some ways, it would be easier just to be with Christ, but I know that God has given me my life for a reason, and I intend to fulfill that reason until He determines that my life will end.”