

Paradox: An Unnatural Response to Natural Circumstances: Death
Philippians 1:19-30

Facing imprisonment, slander, and possibly death, Paul's focus still remained on Christ and the mission of the gospel. The Greek verb "to know" (oida) means to know with certainty. Paul is certain about his own deliverance. Here, he quotes directly from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) the words of Job: "This also will be my salvation." (Job 13:16) Job knew that his suffering was not a result of his sin – that God was not punishing him. Just like Job, Paul was sure that his circumstances would turn out for his ultimate deliverance. Either by life or by death, his suffering would one day be over.

Death is fearful to the degree that it threatens to rob you of what you value most. But Paul valued Christ most! He looked at death and he didn't see it as a frustration. He saw it as an occasion for the fulfillment of his highest value, that Christ might be magnified." Whether Paul lived or whether he died, it was for him a "win, win." Death would bring him nearer to Christ – even more intimacy with Christ – and that would be great gain. But he experienced an equal desire to continue for the sake of the church, both for their progress and their joy in the faith.

The word "granted" (vs. 29) has its root in the Greek word "charis" or "grace". It was granted, or graciously given, to the Philippians (and to all saints) both to believe in Christ as well as to suffer for His sake. Paul wants us to know that as much as salvation is a gift and a privilege, so is suffering, for in it Christ's character is proven and we are identified with Christ and His sacrifice. In fact, in the book of James we are exhorted to rejoice in our sufferings. Paul tells us in Romans 5 that we are to exult in our tribulations. In doing so, we are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Those opposing the gospel are under the judgment of God, a judgment Paul describes as destruction. Those being attacked because of their devotion to the gospel for the sake of Christ are only proving their salvation to be genuine.

When Christians live below the standards of biblical morality and reverence for their Lord, they compromise the full biblical truth concerning the character, plan, and will of God. By so doing, they seriously weaken the credibility of the gospel and lessen their impact on the world (MacArthur)

NOTES

Growth Questions for 10/18 – 10/25

1. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find most helpful, eye-opening, troubling?
2. Life and death are major issues that individuals deal with on a daily basis. The fear of death often inhibits engaging in life. How has the thought of death influenced actions and direction in your life?
3. Paul had an absolute certainty of his deliverance to come (vs. 19). What deliverance is he talking about here in light of the context of the passage? How did his relationship with Christ assure him of the 'deliverance' to come?
4. In Philippians 1:19-30 Paul clearly states it would be better to die than to live. How did he come to that conclusion and why is the statement, "to die is gain" so foreign to your way of life?
5. What was Paul's reason for continuing to live? What do you live for? What gets you excited to be alive each morning? How did the life he lived and the manner in which he lived it mirror Christ?

Proclaim...Reach...Connect...Go

Living on Mission

1. Simply put, death is a difficult subject to address regardless of circumstance or preparation. How can the death of Christ alter perspectives on life and give hope to a world overrun with sickness, suffering, and death?
2. Paul mentions 'the manner of your life' being worthy of Christ. What steps must you take to ensure that your life is in fact worthy of the gospel of Christ? How does your level of biblical understanding directly influence your level of biblical application? Further, how does your level of biblical application influence the world around you?
3. How has a gospel-centered view of death and suffering opened doors for the gospel to advance in your life?
4. How can your life be different tomorrow by 'living for Christ'?

...to proclaim the Gospel and reach those far from God.