



# For Me to Live Is Christ

## Philippians 1

(Lk. 12:16-21) Philippians 1:1-6.

This morning we are going to dive in to a new book, the amazing book of Philippians.

At the same time, this month will be designated, as it has in the past, as are **Spiritual Growth Covenant Month**. Many of you are familiar with our spiritual growth covenant. Let's look at it right now. Each of these five commitments represent and essential element that every Christian needs to build upon to have a growing, vibrant spiritual life.

Each year we are all challenged to step up and make a commitment to God that, "Yes, we will make a genuine effort to be consistent and all five areas." Not three, not four, but all five.

Later this month you will receive a business-size card that, if you are going to make a commitment, I'm going to ask you to sign and return. Then we will laminate that card and give it back to you as a reminder throughout the year.

We will touch on these more in the days ahead, but let me say this right now. *These do not represent the goal of our Christian lives, however they do help us to reach it.* As we look at Philippians we will be looking at the goal. Hopefully by desiring the goal we will as a result want to take the steps that will get us there. That's where these come in.

### The Book of Philippians

Two weeks ago we looked at Philippians chapter 3 and we talked

about keeping the "Main Thing the Main Thing." It was very clear from chapter 3, that the main thing for the apostle Paul, and for us, is to "know and love Jesus Christ." Now of course Paul "new" Jesus in terms of being saved. He knew him as his Savior. But here probably is talking about something more. He is talking about the ongoing, growing, deepening knowledge and experience of Jesus Christ - that was his life goal. Today we shall see, beginning in Chapter 1, more of what that means.

### Don't Waste Your Life

This week I watched an old "B" movie that made a pretty good point. It was a comedy and it was about a man whose life wasn't so good. He was a police detective whose job had become humdrum. His marriage was in shambles, separated. He hardly knew his little boy. But then his doctor told him the tests came back and he had a rare disease and it would not be long before he would be dead. Well, with that news he started to rethink his life and where it had gone. He realized how much he really loved his wife and missed his son. Realizing he had no time to waste, he started to show them both, in tangible ways how much they meant to him, and they responded and life got better. And because he thought he had nothing to lose, he started to do his police work with risk and abandon, actually hoping to be killed in action and get the insurance money for his family. But in every case he ended up heroically arresting the crooks, and getting medals of commendation. It's a comedy, so in the end finds out the diagnosis was wrong...but life had changed dramatically.

The reason I share this with you, is the point it makes. When a person begins to realize what's really important in life and then begins to pursue it, everything else in their life now begins fall into place as well. That's what were I'm talking about in Philippians. It's about "**not wasting your life**". It's about making your life become what it was meant to be. And yes, it will mean being willing to take risks.

God does not want you to waste your life. Jesus did not die for you that you would waste it. Some of you May find that you are wasting your life. You only have one shot.

As we keep reading, I want you to listen and think about the apostle Paul and his compelling passion in his life.

### Philippians 1: 12-30.

There is something counterintuitive to Paul's words. Here is a person who is in prison, perhaps going to die, and he says things like "I'm happy that this happened" or "I know that there trying to make trouble for me, but what does that matter" or "don't forget, you to are called not only to believe in him but to suffer for him as well, and if that happens you can be happy too."

Paul's goal in life was not necessarily to have the easiest life possible. And we waste our lives if we live for pleasure and possessions. Jesus made that very clear...

### The Crystal-Clear Reason for Living

What is the unwasted life?

Phil. 1:20-21 - Paul's passion which is the opposite of the wasted life. Pauls consuming passion is to so live and so that that Christ would look great! The unwasted life is the life that in everything you do, puts Christ on display, as supremely valuable. You have life given you by God is for one reason - make Christ look great! That's why you exist.

In verse 11 he prays that our lives may be lived *"to the glory and praise of God."*

To *know* Christ is to: glorify Christ with your life and exalt in Christ in your body (see v. 20).

The Bible is crystal-clear: God created us for his glory. Thus says the Lord, "**Isaiah 43:6-7** *...Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—<sup>7</sup>everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.*"

So let me try to crystalize Paul's Passion, and what should be the passion of every believer:

God created me and you to live with a single, all-embracing, all-transforming passion— **a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life.**

Enjoying and displaying are both crucial. If we try to display the excellence of God without joy in it, we will display a shell of hypocrisy and create scorn or legalism.

But if we claim to enjoy his excellence and do not display it for others to see and admire, we

deceive ourselves, because the mark of God-enthralled joy is to overflow and expand by extending itself into the hearts of others.

You WILL waste your life if you do not live for the glory of God and when your supreme pleasure is in bringing glory to God.

### What does it mean to glorify God?

That's a good question. How can WE glorify God.

Listen to the way Jonathan Edwards phrased this centuries ago:

"[The] glory of God [does not] consist merely in the creature's perceiving his perfections: for the creature may perceive the power and wisdom of God, and yet take no delight in it, but abhor it. Those creatures that so do, don't glorify God.

Nor doth the glory of God consist especially in speaking of his perfections: for words avail not any otherwise than as they express the sentiment of the mind.

This glory of God, therefore, [consists] in the creature' admiring and rejoicing [and] exulting in the manifestation of his beauty and excellency. . . .

The essence of glorifying . . . God consists, therefore, in the creature' rejoicing in God' manifestations of his beauty, which is the joy and happiness we speak of."

In other words, to glorify God with your life is what you do, but **MORE** than what you do. It is more than what you know and speak of and do.

It is to know about God and his Majesty and glory **AND to find our greatest joy in Him**. It is for God to be loved more than anything else. As Paul said it, *"for me to live is Christ and to die is gain."*

God defines evil this way when he says, *"My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me, the spring of living waters, and dug their cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water"* (Jer. 2:13). God pictures himself as a mountain spring of clean, cool, life-giving water. The way to glorify a fountain like this is to enjoy the water, and praise the water, and keep coming back to the water, and point other people to the water, and get strength from the water, and never, never, never prefer any drink in the world over this water!

That makes the spring look valuable. That is how we glorify God, the fountain of living water.

### Beautify or Magnify?

Let's examine this further. *Glorify* is actually close to the word *beautify*. But *beautify* usually

means “to make something more beautiful than it is,” to improve its beauty. That is emphatically *not* what we mean by *glorify* in relation to God. God cannot be made more glorious or more beautiful than he is. He cannot be improved on. To *Glorify* does not mean add more glory to God.

Glorify is more like the word *magnify* (1:20 - *exalted*). But here too we must be careful. *Magnify* has two distinct meanings. You can magnify like a telescope or like a microscope.

When you magnify like a microscope, you make something tiny look bigger than it is. A dust mite can look like a monster.

If you are my age you remember the Black and White Science Fiction movies of the 50's. Some alien monster invades. All they did was use the camera to super-magnify some spider or bug and it became the alien monster. Horrible films. That also not the way we magnify God.

But when you magnify like a telescope -- take for instance, like these pictures from the Hubble Telescope, peering into the depths of the Milky Way. On a dark, clear night we see stars in the dark sky, but the telescope magnifies that. It takes something unimaginably great and make it look more like what it really is! With the Hubble Space Telescope, pinprick galaxies in the sky are revealed for the billion-star giants that they are.

I love this. Magnifying God like that is Glorifying Him. God created us for this: to live our lives in a way we make him look more like the greatness and the beauty and the infinite worth that he really is!

We waste our lives when we do not pray and think and dream and plan and work toward magnifying God in all spheres of life.

In the night sky of this world, God appears to most people, if at all, like a pinprick of light in a heaven of darkness. But he created us and called us to make him look like what he really is.

### **Lifestyle Implications**

You talk about lifestyle implications! This affects everything we do, or it should. And this brings us back to the place where I think we can now understand the actions and attitudes of the apostle Paul.

You see, the church in America is not where it ought to be. We are a church that tries to function within the “American Dream.” But it won't work.

### **(2 Cor. 12:9-10)**

But Paul's passion was not what we might call “the American dream” of escaping all suffering, persecution, difficulty, pain. His passion was, “*Jesus, anything that allows me to know you better and magnify you more to this world, bring it on Jesus. All I want in life and death, is to enjoy you more and make you more vivid for the world to see.*” That was Paul's passion. That is what it takes if we are going to know Christ and not waste our life.

By treasuring him above all things, and then making lifestyle decisions that go along with what is now our treasure.

Now let me move what we learned this morning into the area of practical application.

We too must learn to look at life with the passion of putting God before all things and desiring to magnify him in all things.

- Possessions. Are given to you so you can use them in such a way that you show that possessions are not your treasure. Christ is.
- Money. Is given to you so you can use it in such a way that you show that money is not your treasure. Christ is.
- Friends family ...are given to you so that you might live with them in such a way that it will be plain to the world that they are not your treasure, Christ is.
- Time, talents ...is given to you so that you might use it's in a way that shows that time is not your treasure, Christ is.
- Houses ...,
- Computers, toys houses, cars..., are given to you so that you might use them in such a way that shows that THEY are not your treasure, Christ is!

(1 Pet. 3:15 Have you wondered why 1 Pet. 3:15 isn't coming true? Anybody asked you recently? Know why? Because it looks like our hope is the same as the things their hoping in.)

### **The Wrong Questions and the Right Ones**

And Christians who don't understand the real goal of their Christian life often make decisions by asking/answering the wrong questions.

They generally ask the wrong question about behavior. They ask, “What’s wrong with it? What’s wrong with this movie? Or this music? Or this — game? Or these companions? With dressing this way?

Or this investment? What’s wrong with going to the cabin every weekend? Or having a cabin?

They asked wrong questions about their time commitments. “I did this long enough, what’s wrong with taking it easy now? What’s wrong with backing off a little bit and enjoying other things? What’s wrong with letting someone else carry the ball?”

Some of you may be contemplating questions like that right now in your life. “I’m not enjoying this the way I used to, why shouldn’t I give it up?”

That is the wrong kind of question, and anyone who understands in their gut, like Paul, the real passion and goal can’t ask that question.

But when you have the right passion, when you don’t want to waste your life, then you ask a different type of question.

When you consider possible behaviors you not ask “what’s wrong with this?” But instead will ask: “*Will this behavior, this decision this help me to treasure Christ more? Will it help me show that I do treasure Christ? Will it help me know Christ or magnify Christ more, or less?*”

The Bible says, “*Whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Corinthians 10:31). So the question is mainly “How can I portray God as glorious in this action? How can I enjoy making much of him in this behavior?”

### 3 Principles in Summary

1. Life and death are a gift. And they are give to you in order that you might display the supreme value of Jesus

2. You must cultivate a supreme valuing of Jesus above all things. (5 spiritual Growth Commitments)

3. This is most clearly seen by what you are willing to risk or sacrifice if he calls, if you are to have more of him.

### Conclusion

Are you going to waste your life? Are you going to buy into the American dream - minimize

suffering, maximize comfort, maximize pleasure, maximize security, build bigger barns, work for the bread that perishes, lay up treasures on earth, covet the praise of man and be happy for 80 years and perish!

Or, are you going to seek Christ crucified, risen and reigning and the treasure of your life that he really is, and then make choices that display to the world his value?

There is an illustration of this in the realm of astronomy. For thousands of years before Copernicus, people thought that the moon, the sun, the planets, and the stars revolved around the earth. This was the Ptolemaic system. It was a good system, much better than most of the people of our day imagine. It could foretell the hours of sunrise and sunset. It could chart the alteration of the heavens. But it was wrong.

And because the sun is the center of our solar system and not the earth, as Ptolemy imagined, it was inevitable that the Ptolemaic system would have defects. First, it was not always accurate, particularly in charting the position of the planets. Under the strain of providing corrections for these movements, the system eventually broke down. Second, it did not allow for progress. New discoveries always went against it.

Do you see the application? You live within a spiritual solar system that is as fixed as the one that fills our heavens. Christ is the center of the system; but many people today, perhaps even you, make themselves the center of the system.

As far as people can see the system works quite well. They serve themselves and generally get what they desire. If they work hard enough for a home, they will get it, particularly if circumstances are with them. If they work hard enough at their job and have ability, they can count on a certain measure of success.

But this human-centered system has defects, just as the Ptolemaic system had. In the final analysis, it is deficient and will fall apart..

Because Christ is the center of the system, the center of the spiritual universe.

Do you know where you stand before God? Will you accept Christ’s place within this system?