

Make It Your Aim to Please God

Philippians 1:18c-26 | "To Live Is Christ"

SERMON TEXT

“Yes, and I will rejoice... For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” — Philippians 1:18c, 21

Big Idea: Because Christ is worthy in life and in death, believers can choose joy, pursue change, stay focused, and keep moving for the progress and joy of others.

1. CHOOSE JOY — PHILIPPIANS 1:18

Sermon Point: Paul chose to view his circumstances with joy.

Paul was imprisoned and criticized, yet he could say, “Yes, and I will rejoice.” Joy is not denial; it is confidence in Christ while hardship remains.

Illustration: Joni Eareckson Tada became paralyzed as a teenager after a diving accident, yet the Lord used her suffering as a platform for ministry through Joni and Friends. Her life shows that joy is not rooted in comfortable circumstances but in the unchanging presence, purpose, and promises of Christ.

Personal Question: Where is God calling me to choose joy instead of bitterness, despair, or complaint?

- Stop defining joy as the absence of hardship.
- Ask, “How can Christ be displayed in this?”
- Choose one act of worship in the middle of the hardship: sing, pray, give thanks, or encourage someone.

2. PURSUE CHANGE — PHILIPPIANS 1:19

Sermon Point: Paul pursued deliverance through prayer and the help of the Spirit.

Paul was not satisfied with the status quo. He looked to the prayers of God’s people and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Illustration: Hudson Taylor prayed for workers for inland China. His burden did not produce passivity; it produced prayer, dependence, and obedient action. Biblical faith prays and then takes the next step of obedience.

Personal Question: What should I pray about specifically, and what obedient step should I take?

- Ask specifically for prayer; do not suffer silently or proudly.
- Pray for God to change the situation and to change you in the situation.
- Identify one obedient step: seek counsel, confess sin, pursue reconciliation, make the call, or serve faithfully.

3. STAY FOCUSED — PHILIPPIANS 1:20-23

Sermon Point: Paul remained grounded in the goal of honoring Christ in life or death. Paul's deepest concern was not merely getting out of prison. He desired that he would not be ashamed, but that Christ would be honored in his body, whether by life or by death.

Illustration: Polycarp, the aged bishop of Smyrna, was pressured to deny Christ and save his life. He refused, saying he could not blaspheme the King who had done him no wrong. His focus was not survival at any cost, but Christ at any cost.

Personal Question: Am I asking first, "How do I get out of this?" or "How can Christ be honored in this?"

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- Prepare before pressure comes; courage in crisis grows through daily faithfulness.
 - Fill in Paul's sentence honestly: "For to me to live is _____."
 - Think biblically about death: for the believer, death is not the loss of Christ but nearness to Christ.

4. KEEP MOVING — PHILIPPIANS 1:24-26

Sermon Point: Paul refocused on the next right move: remaining useful for others' progress and joy in the faith.

Paul desired to depart and be with Christ, which was far better. Yet he also knew that remaining meant fruitful labor for the good of others.

Illustration: Dietrich Bonhoeffer could not control the Nazi prison system, but from Tegel prison he continued encouraging others through letters, counsel, prayer, and faithful witness. His confinement did not cancel his usefulness.

Personal Question: Who needs me to remain faithful for their progress and joy in the faith? _____

- Look for the person God has placed in front of you.
- Do the next right thing, not merely the next dramatic thing.
- Measure usefulness by faithfulness, not visibility.
- Ask, "Will this decision help someone else love Christ more?"

CLOSING REFLECTION

Choose Joy: What truth about Christ gives me reason to rejoice right now?

Pursue Change: What should I pray for, and what obedient step should I take?

Stay Focused: How can Christ be honored in my body, whether by life or by death?

Keep Moving: Who needs me to remain faithful for their progress and joy in the faith?

Final Thought: Paul was not controlled by prison, critics, uncertainty, life, or death. He was controlled by one magnificent aim: Christ must be honored.