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## YOUR LIFE HAS PURPOSE (Philippians 1:19-26)

*Mark Twain was a well-known humorist, but as he neared the end of his life he wrote something profoundly sad. "A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle;...they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other; age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; ...those they love are taken from them, and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. It (the release) comes at last--the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them--and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence,...a world which will lament them a day and forget them forever."*

*What words of despair from a man who seems to have understood little of his purpose in life. While Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, he communicated the very opposite to them. For him, life not only had purpose here on earth, but eternal value of which followers of Jesus should constantly be aware.*

*That's how this apostle could write such a joyful letter while under house arrest. In our last study, Paul was joyful that the power of the gospel was being unleashed on many because of his imprisonment. Paul's circumstances didn't seem to matter that much to him because he was constantly focused on his real purpose in life. And we can, too.*

### CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S PURPOSE

*Philippians 1:18b-20 – Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, and it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but with full courage now as always **Christ will be honored in my body**, whether by life or by death.*

We are spiritual beings. That means that we are more than a body walking around. When we attend an open-

casket funeral, we see a body before us, but the person—the real person – is still alive. When people were made in God's image in the beginning, God placed in us a living soul, that part of us that will live for eternity. Paul knew this reality and taught it often.

*2 Corinthians 5:6, 8 - Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: We are confident, I say, and willing rather **to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.***

The other reality we must face is not only that our souls live on after our bodies die, but also that not all souls have the same destination.

*Matthew 7:13, 14 - Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to **destruction**, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to **life**, and those who find it are few.*

In these verses, Paul is clear in his teaching that he is expecting deliverance. Not deliverance from prison necessarily, because he says the deliverance will be by life or by death. He knows his situation is temporary. One way or another, he will experience God's salvation. That is the gospel – the good news the Jesus can save us from an eternity separated from him.

Perhaps the key phrase in this paragraph is Paul's understanding of his ultimate purpose – that "Christ will be honored in my body". We were all created by God and have the same purpose: to bring glory to him.

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**THE GLORY OF GOD, AND, AS OUR ONLY MEANS TO GLORIFYING HIM, THE SALVATION OF HUMAN SOULS, IS THE REAL BUSINESS OF LIFE.**

**C. S. LEWIS**

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## CONVINCED OF GOD'S PROMISE

*Philippians 1:21 – For me **to live is Christ and to die is gain.***

Here's an example worth following. Paul was consumed with his love and devotion to Christ himself. He knew that if he lived, he would keep serving Christ. If he was killed for his faith, his spirit would be with the Lord and he would continue to love and serve him. Either way, he could not lose.

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**HE IS NO FOOL WHO GIVES WHAT HE CANNOT  
KEEP TO GAIN THAT WHICH HE CANNOT LOSE.**  
**JIM ELLIOT**

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There are some people who will tell you that if you live for God, if your faith is strong, then nothing bad can happen to you. That not only defies human experience, it also flies in the face of biblical teaching. It's not true of Job or Paul or even Jesus himself. It's not the promise given to anyone who chooses to follow Christ.

What is promised to those who love and obey God is a life of fulfilling service, joy in the midst of suffering, and the peace of knowing God is exalted and glorified.

*2 Timothy 4:7, 8 - I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth **there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.***

## COMMITTED TO GOD'S PEOPLE

*Philippians 1:22-24 – If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. **But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.***

Paul knew the likelihood that his imprisonment would eventually lead to his death (and he was beheaded by Roman authorities one to five years after writing this letter.) He didn't fear execution and said here that he looked forward to it, since it

meant his soul would be in heaven. He was conflicted, though, because of his love for the Philippians and others he had ministered to. For them, it was better for him to remain and he was willing to do that, due to his strong commitment to them.

## CONCUR WITH GOD'S PLAN

*Philippians 1:25, 26 – Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, **for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.***

Shepherds sacrifice for the good of their flock. Paul's heart and his priority of serving the church comes through in his willingness to suffer the loss of freedom and continue with those he loved. Why? That they would keep growing in their faith with joy. He knew that was God's plan for him and for them.

At some point, God's plan will be to take us off the earth. We don't know when, but it will happen. Until then, do we know how he wants to use us in his plan to serve others? If not, we need to find out and fulfill it. If you do know, then that is God's plan for you and you are meant to spend your short days on earth employing your abilities and resources to benefit others. Don't miss the joy of giving your life away to help those who need you.

## CONCLUSION

Paul gives us a tremendous example in these verses. What could be more important than finding and living out God's purpose for us? Anything else is a waste of our lives. If you haven't memorized and meditated on this verse, I recommend it to you:

*Romans 8:28 – And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, **for those who are called according to his purpose.***

### BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)  
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.  
Room 153 House Office Building