“Single Focus”

PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26

11-13-2024

Take this **test**: For me to live is _____.

What is life to you? What are you focusing on?

Christ was the focal point of Paul's life. For Paul, life was summarized by one person - CHRIST!

***CHRIST MUST BE THE FOCAL POINT OF YOUR LIFE!**

Is He? If He is, there will be 3 evidences in your life. (3 test questions to ask yourself)

I. Paul's attention focused on MAGNIFYING Christ (v.19-21)

(Is your attention focused on magnifying Christ?)

II. Paul's attention focused on MEETING Christ (face to face) (v.21b, 22b, 23)

(Is your attention focused on meeting Christ?)

A. PAUL VIEWED DEATH AS A PROMOTION (v.21b)

B. PAUL VIEWED DEPARTING AS A PREFERENCE (v.22b-23)

III. Paul's attention focused on MINISTERING for Christ (v.22a, 24-26)

(Is your attention focused on ministering for Christ?)

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INTRO:
Before his death, Jean Paul Sartre, a French philosopher and novelist who declined the Nobel prize for literature in 1964, concluded that life was "empty, tasteless, and without purpose"

But is it? Can anyone find significance in life? If so where is it to be found?

The world is confusing because it offers so many different solutions. So many avenues for contentment & satisfaction. People change jobs, careers, clothes, mates etc. all to just throw up their hands in despair in the end and say "what is life all about". Life to many is a confusing maze. <u>The picture is distorted.</u>

There is meaning to life. You can have purpose for living! There can be real joy! But it is only found by your focusing in one direction.

Paul's focus was sharp and his picture was clear.
Paul's <u>philosophy of Christian living</u> is brief and to the point.
"For me to live is <u>Christ</u>..." (v.21)

Christ meant everything to Paul. His <u>goals</u> were Christ's goals,
<u>work</u> word,
<u>righteousness</u> righteousness
<u>life</u> life,
<u>ministry</u> ministry

ill. new cameras that automatically focus everything in relation to a single box in the center of the lens.

Take this **<u>test</u>**: For me to live is _____.

(some would have to say: food ("I don't eat to live, I live to eat"), Money, fame, power, car, house, rock & roll, Harley Davidson, job, or even family.

What is life to you? What are you focusing on?

Christ was the focal point of Paul's life. For Paul, life was summarized by one person - CHRIST!

***CHRIST MUST BE THE FOCAL POINT OF YOUR LIFE!**

Is He?
If He is, there will be 3 evidences in your life. (3 test questions to ask yourself)

I. Paul's attention focused on MAGNIFYING Christ (v.19-21)

(Is your attention focused on magnifying Christ?)

YOU WILL MAGNIFYING HIM BY:

A. TRUSTING HIS FAITHFULNESS TO YOU (v.19-20a)

Note context: Paul now turns to the possible outcome of his trial. The prospect seems bright; he expects to be set free. But he considers also the other possibility. With both possibilities in mind Paul trusts God's faithfulness, and is willing to accept whatever God gives.

"for" (v.19) explains how Paul could continue to rejoice (v.18).

Paul's trust is seen in his confidently saying: "I know"

He says I know that this (**trial** by Caesar) will turn out (result) in my salvation (deliverance from bondage) either by death or freedom.

- Paul depended on the prayers of others
- Paul depended on the supply (provision) of the Holy Spirit.

- Paul had a single vision (one track mind) = "earnest expectation" - the word refers to his watching with his head turned away from other objects. He had a concentrated intense hop which ignored other interests.

- Paul had assurance of sure victory - "in nothing (death or life) I shall be put to shame. He knew that God would not let him down. He knew that the Spirit would come through with the needed strength to stand trial.

B. GIVING YOUR FAITHFULNESS TO HIM (v.20b-21a)

"Christ shall be magnified in by body"

"Magnified" = To make big, large. Paul is saying: "My body will be the theater in which Christ's glory is displayed" (Ellicott)

Our problem is that we are not humble enough to let Christ display himself thru us, rather we tend to want to display ourselves thru Him.

Jesus wants to be on the throne of our lives; He desires the Lordship that is His. "The spiritual-minded Christian dethrones self and enthrones the Saviour."

Does Christ need to be magnified? Yes and No.
- No - Because our magnifying Him does not increase who he is.
- Yes - Because our magnifying Him does increase how other perceive Him to be.

Today, Christ is clouded (by false religions) and viewed as small in the eyes of many people (exp. with the down fall of so many "Christian leaders")

How can a human being ever magnify the Son of God?

ill. The stars are much bigger than the telescope, & yet the telescope magnifies them and brings them closer. Your body is to be a telescope that brings Christ close to people. (Wiersbe)

"**be** magnified" Note: Paul does not say "I shall magnify Christ" The verb is passive. If Christ is magnified it is because of God answering prayer (v.19) and because of the Spirits provision of power (v.19). We cannot magnify Christ in the flesh (by ourselves). It would like trying to let someone look through your telescope while you have the lens cap on it.

HOW WOULD PAUL MAGNIFY CHRIST?

- **with "all BOLDNESS"** = Lit. speaking all, fearless speech, outspokenness. appl. Would you have such confidence (if standing before a pagan court) to say in your heart "I would not compromise (fudge) a single conviction. I would speak as freely as if I was speaking to my Sunday School class about Christ.

Paul was ready to stand trial and not disgrace the Gospel thru cowardice, fear, lack of free utterance etc.

- with **consistency** = "as always so now also" This was a lifetime pattern with Paul.

- with **full surrender** = "in my body"
What a privilege to have Christ dwelling within us! What a quest to have at all seasons. What an honor to be able to show off Christ by our lives. (rather than showing off ourselves)

"whether it be by life, or by death"
It didn't matter what Paul was asked to give - just so long as Christ could be glorified!

- with **total dedication** = "for to me, to live is Christ"

Life consists in what we are living for. ie.what we are alive to.
ex. My wife comes alive when we go shopping and she sees shoes for sale. Whereas I fall asleep. But if we visit the tool section of a home improvement store or a sporting goods store, I suddenly come alive! The thing that excites us and "turns us on" is the thing that really is "life" to us.

For Paul Living was Christ (that's it!)

Before the Damascus road. (Acts 9), Paul's life consisted in nothing more than living against Christ. Now it was just the opposite!

Christ was Paul's beginning of life, his continuing of life, his end of life, his inspiration of life, his task of life, his strength for life, and his reward of life - Barclay.

If Christ were to be taken out of life, for Paul there would be nothing left.
Appl. If Christ was taken out of your life what would be left? What would be missing?

"For Me to live is Christ" does not mean to live to confess Christ, be like Christ, nor to live for Christ. But Paul's life **was Christ**!

After all He is creator (Jn.1:3,4), Redeemer (Jn.10:10), Savior (I Jn.5:11,12), and Sustainer (Gal.2:20 - "no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me")

II. Paul's attention focused on MEETING Christ (face to face) (v.21b, 22b, 23)

(Is your attention focused on meeting Christ?)

A. PAUL VIEWED DEATH AS A PROMOTION (v.21b)

"to die is **gain**" = profit, advantageous; a promotion! Death for Paul simply meant to have the same thing - Christ! **only more of Him.**

- more intimate fellowship with Christ.
Death for Paul was the passage way into Christ's presence. He would move from serving the king to seeing the king. And from living for the king to living with the king.

- no more hindrances to his fellowship with Christ.
no more sin, hardships, trials, chains etc.

Shakespeare's hamlet became absorbed in a lonely, soul disturbing conversation with himself. The alternative of life or death overwhelmed him. The soliquy begins: "to be or not to be? That is the question" Hamlet did not know whether it was more devastating to face the unavoidable afflictions of life or to fear the unknown agonies of death. (cited from Preston Taylor - Philippians).

B. PAUL VIEWED DEPARTING AS A <u>PREFERENCE</u> (v.22b-23)

- Paul's predicament (v.22b-23a)
"I am in a strait betwixt two" = I am being pressed on both sides.
Pressure from both angles. "in a pickle"
He was caught between 2 desires.

- Paul's preference (v.23b)
"desire" = a longing; strong urge.
"depart" = word used by armies that took down their tents & prepared to <u>go to another location</u>. The word was also used by sailors who pulled up their ship's anchors & set <u>sail for another port.</u>

If you are not ready to die maybe its because you are <u>too stuck</u> (anchored) to the port of this world. Your anchor is deeply sunk into other priorities.

Paul in a sense feels like an eagle trapped in a cage. Ready to soar away from such an <u>unnatural</u> environment.

"together with Christ" - There is no intermediate stop between earth and one's final destiny. "...to be absent from the body (is to be) present with the Lord" (II Cor.5:8).

Jesus said to the repentant thief dying on the cross: "<u>Today</u> shalt thou be with me in paradise"(Lk.23:43) As Stephen faced death, he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Act.7:56)
Death immediately ushers us into God's glorious presence.

Hymn: *Face to face I shall behold him*
Far beyond the starry sky
Face to face in all His glory;
I shall see Him by and by!

"which is far better" - Death for one who is ready is a preference. If this is true the ending of life should not be a <u>burden</u> but a <u>blessing</u>. It should be a <u>transltion</u>, not a termination; an <u>advantage</u> no adversity; <u>ecstasy</u> not agony. It is a "graduation to Glory!" (Taylor p.54)

We do not sorrow as others who have no hope (I Th.4:13).
Being with Christ is the best thing imaginable (He is our bridegroom Eph.5)

III. Paul's attention focused on MINISTERING for Christ (v.22a, 24-26)

(Is your attention focused on ministering for Christ?)

A. A MINISTRY THAT BEARS FRUIT (v.22a)

For Paul, life automatically equalled fruitful labor.

B. A MINISTRY THAT MEETS NEEDS (v.24-25)

Although he had a longing to depart, Paul wanted to live for the benefit of others.

"That which anchors us to life for a longer season should be an awareness that we may help others" (Taylor)

How long will doctors be needed in the world? - As long as there are sick.
How long will firemen .....fires.
Sunday school teachers?.....Children who need the gospel.
preachers.....Lost men,
Christians in need of growth.
encouragers.....discouraged.

1. Encouraging others to **progress** in their faith.
   (to grow)

2. Encouraging other to **rejoice** in their faith.
   (to glow) v.25 "joy" v.26 "rejoicing"

Paul was willing to have heaven postponed so that he could help other Christians grow & glow.

Paul thought more of the Philippians then his own desires.
They would have joy in seeing Paul again.
They would have joy in having their prayers answered.

CONCLUSION: Christ was the focal point of Paul's life.

Is He of yours?

Is your attention focused on 1) Magnifying Christ?
2) Meeting Christ? 3) Ministering for Christ?

One time the emperor tried to frighten the daylights out of a man named Chrysostom (Golden tongued), by threatening:
"Ill take away from you your property."
Chrysostom replied, "you cannot take away my property or my treasure. It is in heaven."

"Then I'll take away your loved ones."
"Oh, my loved ones have already gone to heaven."

"Then I'll put you in solitary confinement."
"You cannot put me in solitary confinement for Jesus has promised to go with me and to never forsake me."

"Then I shall put you to death."
"If you do that, I'll thank you because you will transport me right into His presence."

The emperor went back and called a huddle. What could we do to such a man! What can you do to such a man?
What can stop him from rejoicing? Nothing!
"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"