



Season 8 Podcasts

Living for the Gospel

By

Mark McGee

So far in my 8th Season Podcast series I've shared thoughts with you about:

- 8 Rules for Bible Study
- 40 Rules for Ministry
- The Heart of the Gospel
- Defending and Confirming the Gospel
- Your Fellowship in the Gospel
- The Completion of the Gospel
- The Affection of the Gospel
- The Discernment of the Gospel
- The Excellence of the Gospel
- The Sincerity of the Gospel
- The Fruit of the Gospel
- The Advancement of the Gospel
- The Preaching of the Gospel

The next aspect I'd like to share with you is 'living' for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul continued his letter to the Christians in Philippi by writing:

“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Philippians 1:19-21

Paul 'knew' (*eidó* – to see, beware, perceived, was sure) that what he had been writing about (context) would 'turn out' (*apobainó* – future tense – 'become, result in, step off, disembark') in his 'deliverance' (*sótería* – health, safety, rescue.) What kind of 'deliverance?' Let's read on.

‘Through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.’ What were the Philippians praying for Paul? That he would be ‘rescued’ from his imprisonment in Rome. What was the ‘supply’ of the Spirit of Jesus Christ? The word ‘supply’ is *epichorégia* and means ‘provision, contribution, lavish resources, ample supply.’ Paul knew how Christian prayer works with the abundant supply of the Holy Spirit. He knew something very good was on its way, but what supply was he expecting?

Paul’s ‘earnest expectation’ (*apokaradokia* – ‘intense anticipation, eager expectation’) and ‘hope’ (*elpis* – confident expectation, faith, hope, expectation of what is certain’) that in nothing he would be ‘ashamed’ (*aischunó* – ‘feel shame for oneself, be disgraced, be ashamed, be dishonored, shrink from’). Paul was confident that he would not shrink from his duties as an imprisoned apostle, which would bring dishonor and shame upon him, but that he would be ‘bold’ (*parrésia* – publicly open, be outspoken, be blunt, speak with assurance and confidence’) in his faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul then wrote – ‘as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.’ Paul was not afraid of death. Whether he lived or died he was determined to bring glory to God. Paul then wrote what has become one of the best-known and most quoted verses in the New Testament – ‘For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.’ You might call that Paul’s motto, one that should be ours as well. Living for the Gospel means that to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Think about it. Isn’t that the truth that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives every true Christian? If we are alive, our life is all about loving and serving Christ. If we die, we receive great gain because we go to live with Christ forever. Whether we live or die, we belong to Christ and He will deliver us from any event in our lives. Jesus is our Savior. He is our Lord.

Then Paul shared something that has resonated with me for many years –

“But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.”

Paul told the Philippians that he was ‘hard-pressed’ (*sunechó* – constrain, hold, afflict, to compress) between living and dying. He personally had a ‘desire’ (*epithumia* – ‘strong longing, passion built on strong feelings’) to ‘depart’ (*analuó* – ‘return, to unloose for departure’) and be with Christ which is ‘far better’ (*mallon kreisson* – ‘more in a greater degree, more than, greater advantage, better.’) For Paul, who had suffered so greatly for preaching the Gospel and establishing Christian churches across the Roman Empire, his strong desire was to ‘return’ to be with Jesus Christ. That would have happened if Paul had died in prison. I understand Paul’s strong desire. I

have a similar desire at times. The joys of being with Christ outshine anything we can experience on earth.

However ... God has called each of us to complete the work He has given us to do. Paul understood that, which is why he wrote: 'Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.' Paul was telling the Philippians how much he loved and cared for them. Though it would have been 'far better' for him to 'depart and be with Christ,' the apostle knew it would be better for the Philippians and other Christians for him to remain alive on earth. That's the meaning of 'remaining in the flesh.' Paul wrote that remaining in the flesh was 'more needful' (*anagkaios* – more necessary, more pressing) for them. How did Paul know that? Remember, Paul was an apostle. He had a special relationship with God and was inspired by God to know the right things to think and say. Paul had his own personal desire to depart and be with Christ, but he also knew from the Lord that God wanted him to remain in the flesh for a while longer because the Philippians and other Christians needed him.

Why did the Philippians need Paul?

“And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.” Philippians 1:25-26

Paul knew that as the apostle to the Gentiles God would use him to help the Philippians and other believers for their spiritual progress (*prokopé* – profit, furtherance) and joy of faith – ‘that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.’ Instead of the Philippians mourning over the continued imprisonment of their beloved apostle or even his death at the hands of the Romans, they would rejoice abundantly when he came to them again in person. And he most likely did. Paul traveled to many places after his release from his first Roman imprisonment. Philippi would certainly have been one of those places, especially after what he wrote to them. Paul’s personal struggles and suffering set aside for the good of the people God loved and that Paul loved.

Paul's example of personal sacrifice over personal desire speaks powerfully to me. I hope it speaks to you as well.

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In Christ's Love and Grace,

Mark McGee

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