

## The Priority of the Gospel

*Philippians 1:12-26*

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### **Philippians 1:12-26**

12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has actually resulted in the advance of the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is in the cause of Christ. 14 Most of the brothers in the Lord have gained confidence from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the message fearlessly. 15 To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and strife, but others out of good will. 16 These do so out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; 17 the others proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely, seeking to cause me anxiety in my imprisonment. 18 What does it matter? Just that in every way, whether out of false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed. And in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice 19 because I know this will lead to my deliverance through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. 20 My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

21 For me, living is Christ and dying is gain. 22 Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. 23 I am pressured by both. I have the desire to depart and be with Christ—which is far better— 24 but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. 25 Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that, because of me, your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

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### **Introduction**

Christian, what should be the chief priority in your life and your death?

Should the chief priority in your life be making a good living? Should it be being successful? Being Smart? Being Well Educated? Being Popular? Being Married? Being Single? Being Comfortable? Having a Nice Retirement? Having a lot of friends? Being Sophisticated? Being Well Dressed?

What should it be?

**Exposition** - Our chief priority in life and in death should be the gospel of Jesus Christ. This morning, we are going to see how that priority manifests itself in our life:

- I. **We demonstrate the priority of the Gospel when we value its advancement more than the improvement of our own circumstances. (Vss. 12-18a)**

- a. Paul wants the Philippians to know that some wonderful things have occurred in light of his imprisoned circumstances:
  - i. The whole imperial guard has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - ii. Other Christians have become bolder in their proclamation of the gospel.
- b. For Paul, his freedom, comfort, ease, or even life are not as important to him as other hearing about the good new of Jesus Christ!
- c. Even when people share the true gospel with false motives, Paul is thrilled because he knows that the power to see people changed is in the message, not the messenger. Paul rejoices in the advancement of the gospel!
- d. **Illustration** – Saeed Abendi’s Imprisonment in Tehran’s Evin Prison
  - i. Imprisoned in September 2012
  - ii. Being held for his Christian beliefs
  - iii. Malnourished
  - iv. Random Beatings
  - v. Fake Executions
  - vi. Why doesn’t he just give up? Why doesn’t he just deny Jesus? Because like the apostle Paul, Saeed values the gospel and its advancement more than the improvement of his circumstances!

**II. We demonstrate the priority of the Gospel when we value others growth in it more than our own life or death. (Vss. 18b-26)**

- a. For Paul, the honor of Christ in his body was of ultimate importance. He was totally submitted to the will of God.
- b. For Paul, living meant the continuation of Christ-centered ministry. For Paul, dying meant dwelling in the presence of Christ for all eternity. (What do you do with Christians like this?)
- c. Paul knows that being with the LORD would be better for him, but Paul did not make decisions based upon what was best for him. He thought about others’ needs before his own desires.

**Application**

- 1) We must be ready to sacrifice our comfort, our ease, our aspirations, our money, our wealth, our health, our traditions, our preferences, and our very life if it means that the gospel will be advanced!

- a. The reason we won't quickly make these sacrifices is because we love other things more than we love the gospel.
  - b. Do you want to see the gospel advanced? Then let the sacrifice begin with you! Sacrifice your comfort! Sacrifice your self-preservation! Sacrifice your pride! Sacrifice your money! Sacrifice whatever you need to in order to see others come to know Jesus!
- 2) We must be willing and ready to deny ourselves for the sake of seeing others grow in their Christian maturity.
- a. Would you forgo the immediate enjoyment of the presence of Christ for the sake of another person's maturity in Christ? That is the question that makes a disciple-maker!
  - b. As disciples of Christ, it is clear that the mandate of heaven is for us to be making disciples. Discipleship is hard. It is time-consuming. It is messy, but it is worth it!

Are there any in this room that would heed the call this morning to put the advancement of the gospel before the improvement of their own circumstances?

Oh that God would give us Gospel-Centered Aspirations!

Are there any here this morning that desire to see others grow in the grace of the gospel enough to deny themselves?

Oh that Christ would move us to Gospel-Motivated Self-Denial!

If you do not know Jesus this morning, today is the day to confess your sins to Him and ask Him to forgive you. Cry out to God to have mercy on you and save you!

If you have been wondering from Jesus and have been half-hearted in your commitment to Him, today is the day to repent and ask Him to receive you back. He is faithful and ready to restore you!

If you are following Christ but not currently committed to His body, today is the day to abandon any self-centered reservations and make the commitment of church membership!

Let the Spirit lead you in how you need to respond to His Word this morning, but don't leave without responding to the LORD!