

Discover Hour
Philippians 1:19-26
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In this passage, Paul describes being what we commonly refer to as “between a rock and a hard place.” The word, sunexo, was commonly used of a place where a traveler had to go through a narrow passage, unable to turn to the left or to the right, they could only go straight ahead. Perhaps we can imagine going through a cave or a narrow passage down at Turkey Run or Shades State Park. Both sides are pressing close against us, in this case, the sides are positive, he desires them both: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (v. 21). Paul’s attitude in this passage can seem a bit out of reach for us. After all, if we imagine being chained to a Roman guard all the waking hours of our day, under house arrest awaiting trial, we might imagine the top concern on our mind might be getting out! In fact, we might be tempted to describe Paul here as something of a fanatic, out there, and beyond us. His chief goal is that Christ “be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death” (. 20).

In the first two verses of the passage, Paul’s concern is that he not be ashamed, but that Christ would be exalted in his body. One commentator described this as Paul desiring that his life and body be the theater in which the glory of Christ is put on stage for all to see. This prayer to not be ashamed is frequent in the Psalms including Psalm 25:3; 34:3; 35:27; 39:16; 57:11; 69:30; 70:4; 92:5; 104:1; 126:2-3

One way to see this passage is that Paul presents us with a new perspective on both life and death. We often have a very different view on death here than Paul presents. We see it as our most treasured possession, which leads to fear that it can be easily snuffed out. But if, like Paul, we believe and trust that to die is gain, then I am free and living with the right perspective I take on life with an open hand instead of a closed fist.

One reaction I have to this passage is to wonder if I or we can reach the same perspective that Paul describes here or if he is an exception, a person who reached a place in his faith that few others can realistically reach. His path in life is certainly singular, a zealous Pharisee, he directed the persecution of Christians. After his experience on the Damascus road he then became an apostle and Christianities chief proponent. His missionary journeys were difficult experiences, he was shipwrecked, and imprisoned and clearly suffered for his faith in ways few of us can imagine.

Discussion Questions:

Can we hope to reach a position and perspective in our faith that Paul did or is he so different from us that we need to find a way to translate his perspective down a few notches?

If we take Paul’s words here seriously, which should we hope for, life or death?

Hook

Family Feud

What is your greatest fear?

What is it that we fear about death?

Book

Paul – for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain

Live is Christ

All is rubbish in comparison to Christ Phil. 3:8 check

Buried with Christ and raised with him Roman. 6:4, 8, 11; Galatians 2:20

Everything is secondary to Christ – Roman authorities, his trial, physical comfort, opinions of others, his own life and death

Barclay For Paul Christ the:

Beginning of his life – Damascus Rd. experience

Continuance of his life – ministry

End of life

Inspiration for life, task, strength, and reward of life

Die is gain

Usual perspective – Westwood Village Mortuary, Botox etc., 39 and stayed there,

Apokaradokia – head, away from, to look – look at something in eager intense look and away from everything else

Depart – analuein – strike camp, pull up anchor/ drop ropes set said

Paramenein – wait beside a person, ready to help at any moment

But then, a new question arises, which is better and which should I hope for: life or death?

Ill: fancy restaurant, dessert cart, two outstanding choices.

Look

Groups:

Took