

A 'Win-Win' for the Gospel Driven!

Imagine you're a contestant on the game showed *Deal or No Deal*. You've been patient & strategic re. the banker's increasingly tempting offers to much smaller amounts than you could potentially win, you've said "No Deal!"

Rightly or wrongly, you viewed the smaller amounts as a "loss" compared the surpassing value of the million \$ prize. No, you were "*in it to win it*" . . . win it all.

This day, God decided not to humble you, by sending you walking, with nothing. He chose to bless you, because He knew your Gospel plans for that prize money!
(a church building for the upcoming Logan church plant!)

You've navigated your way to just 2 cases left!:

You've opened neither the \$1 Suitcase, nor the \$1,000,000 suitcase!

Forget the \$416000 offered by the banker . . . You choose a suitcase:

They first open the *other* suitcase the one you did not chose.

And to your enormous disappointment, that suitcase has the million dollars!

You slap yourself shouting,

"416,000 birds in the hand are worth more than a million in the bush!"

Anticipating the dread of only \$1, and the more dreadful 7-Eleven coffee \$1 will buy you, your case is opened up, and the value is . . . \$1 BILLION dollars!

You're in shock ... You were expecting a win-lose situation.

But this is clearly a **win-win** situation – both choices would have made you wealthy – and granted a church-plant building!!

You gotta love a "win-win" scenario!

What about when the stakes are much higher?

Higher than a million \$, a billion \$?

Yes . . . the stakes of Life or Death.

. . . I've been thinking a lot about death lately:

Not just because my President seems to be pushing the envelope on starting WWII! but Last year my mother-in-law died.

Last term was the funeral of Ben Hart's dad, a death which came without warning.

Last month a good high school friend of mine had heart attack while cycling across the Golden Gate Bridge and collapsed into a coma.

How could these scenarios be considered *gain*?

How could the choice between life or death be considered a win-win scenario?

This is precisely the choice Paul is facing, which he clearly describes as a Win-Win!

"For me, to live is Christ!, and to die is Gain!" (Phil 1:21)

Win!

Win!

And you'd be surprised which suitcase – life or death – Paul's considers the billion \$ one!

But we're back to the Question of *HOW* Paul can say this?!

***FOR ME** to live is Christ & to die is gain"*

The Answer is the big idea of today's passage, Philippians chapter 1 verses 18 to 30.

Last week, in verses 1-18 we saw this big idea:

Rejoice! The Gospel is Unstoppable in Life

This week, could easily add just 2 words:

Rejoice! - The Gospel is Unstoppable in Life OR Death

But I've stated the big idea this way:

Christ-centred Joy fuels ***Courageous Gospel Progress!***

So I've titled this sermon : *A "Win-Win" for the Gospel-driven!*

This simple Outline reflects the flow of the passage:

- Our Confidence for Gospel Progress (1:18-20)
- Our Motivation for Gospel Progress (1:21-26)
- Our Partnership in Gospel Progress (1:27-30)

OUR CONFIDENCE FOR GOSPEL PROGRESS (1:18-20)

Verse 18 is a transition, from looking back to looking ahead:

The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice! Yes, and I will continue to rejoice!

Verse 18 sums up Paul looking **back** at how Adversity has Advanced the Gospel:

'in this I **rejoice**'

Verse 18 ends looking **ahead** at how Adversity will Advance the Gospel:

"in this I **will** continue to rejoice"

Rejoice! Rejoice! It's a joy centred on **the value of Jesus Christ**.

It's in v.20 we begin to see that **Gospel Courage** is fuelled by Christ-centred joy.

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have full courage so that now as always Christ will be EXALTED in my body, whether by life or by death!

In prison on death row, how great is Paul's Confidence in Gospel Progress!

- If Romans 8 teaches us neither life nor death can *separate us from the Love of Christ*,
- Philippians 1 teaches us neither life nor death can *stop the Honour of Christ & His gospel*

But the *reason* for Paul's great gospel confidence is in the verse before, v.19,

For I know that through your prayers AND the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ . . .

Do you hear that? **Paul is not at all putting his confidence in Paul!**

Paul is not Maria from *The Sound of Music*, who sings,

With each step I'm more certain everything will turn out fine,

I have confidence the world can all be mine!

*They'll have to agree – I have **confidence in me!***

Rubbish! Paul's confidence is in 2 places:

1] God's people **praying** for him & his gospel witness, and 2] the **Spirit of Jesus (The Holy Spirit)**, not just empowering Paul with gifting to speak for Christ, but giving Paul hope

that the Philippians' prayers will be effectual, because the Holy Spirit makes them effectual/successful, as Paul writes elsewhere, in Romans 8,
"Even when we do not know what to pray . . . the Spirit Himself intercedes for His people ACCORDING TO the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27).

And prayer made 'according to the will of God' is a prayer that gets a "Yes" answer!

When Paul was in prison in Rome, in Acts 28, Paul's *last words* recorded also shared his *lasting confidence* in God's plan for the gospel:

"I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they WILL listen!"

Just think – this is Paul!

- A worker of awesome miracles! Healing the blind & crippled; raising the dead!
- A bold proclaimer of the gospel – so bold he got in trouble nearly everywhere he went from preaching Christ!
- In Acts 17, the antagonistic Jews of Thessalonica complained of Paul – *"this guy is turning the world upside-down!" (17:6)*

Paul was confident because of prayer/begged for prayers, not just from the Philippian church, but the Roman Church, the Ephesian church, to whom he writes, *"keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray for ME also, to boldly proclaim the mystery of the Gospel!" (Eph 6:18)*

In fact, Paul's success in turning the world upside down is because he was not confident in himself, but urged and urged churches to **pray** for gospel ministry acc'd to God's plan!

Do you want courage in your gospel witness, as a church? An individual? Be **praying** for gospel progress amidst mounting opposition to Jesus, and asking others to pray for that!
 God's spiritual battle is won not by "air supremacy", but "*prayer supremacy!*"

Just before we move on to the next section, we need to ask . . .

If prayer made according to the will of God is a prayer that gets a "Yes" answer, in Paul's context here, it would be a 'yes' to what request?...finishing v. 19

"For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my DELIVERANCE."

Paul is quoting verbatim the Greek translation of Job 13:16, where Job is facing potential death from intense affliction of illness (& intense affliction of 'friends', so-called!):

"Though He [God] slay me, yet will I hope in Him!... this will turn out for my DELIVERANCE." (identical Greek to Phil 1:19)

The Q: What Deliverance did Paul have in mind?

Is Paul speaking of Deliverance THRU or Deliverance FROM....

- Physical Deliverance from Death, found not guilty by Nero's earthly court?
 or
- Ultimate Deliverance thru Death, found not guilty by God's heavenly court?
 . . . as in Acts chapter 7, when Stephen, condemned & stoned to death by the Jewish court, saw the heaven's open and Jesus, standing, interceding for Him at the right hand of God, approved by the heavenly court, the only court that ultimately matters?
Which deliverance is Paul speaking of?...FROM death of THRU death?

We don't know because Paul does not know!

In a few verses, we'll see he has an *hunch* he'll be physically delivered *from* death
 . . . BUT later in **chapter 2** he shows he is not sure,

"Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering" (Phil 2:27)

This is the same language he uses in 2 Timothy 4, just before his earthly execution, clearly speaking of ultimate/heavenly deliverance *thru* death

➤ 2 Tim 4:6

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come."

➤ 2 Tim 4:18

The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom"

Unlike 2 Timothy 4, In Philippians 1, Paul just does not know!

But this is what Paul *did know***:

Either way, in life or death, Paul has confidence not to be ashamed, but **courageous!**

(v.20) that in his body, alive or martyred, Christ will be magnified, the Gospel made effective;

(v.19) he knows he will be vindicated in God's heavenly court, because of Jesus, not Himself!

"and in this I will rejoice!"

Can you rejoice in this, whatever your circumstances?

Did you have confidence to face God in his heavenly court on that day, because of Christ?

Later on, we'll consider this thought some more. For now we move on to . . .

OUR MOTIVATION FOR GOSPEL PROGRESS (1:21-26)

Shakespeare's Hamlet said,

"To be or not to be, that is the question."

If Paul and Shakespeare were contemporaries, I reckon Paul might have responded,

'Amateur! Find some substance, man!'

Paul gives us a truly epic verse of literature, v. 21,

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!"

Now we've enter to **hot furnace** of Paul's spiritual engine room, his motivation.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!"

Verse 23 explains why – for Paul – to die is **gain**. See if you can find his "why":

"My desire is to depart and be WITH CHRIST, for that is far better.

What's his motivation? Being **with Christ** is what makes it gain! The value Christ!

So he'd prefer to "Depart" – a word used of a ship pulling up anchor to set sail, also used of a soldier getting his release papers to go home from war.

So, too, release from ***spiritual*** battle: In 2 Tim 4:6-7, Paul writes

The time of my departure has come.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

What a great day when those papers come!

Less 'great' is leaving the battle, if it's an *important* battle (the gospel)

More 'great' is going home – **reunited with those you love!**

To depart is to be with Christ whom we love! . . . with Christ where?...

What did Jesus say to the repentant criminal on the cross next to Him? (Lk 23:4
"Today you will be WITH ME in Paradise!" [NOT soul-sleep; not purgatory. Paradise! Home]

Whatever the state of things before the cross & resurrection of Christ,
 Now, for a Christian . . .

to depart is to be WITH CHRIST, for that is far better." (Phil 1:23)

Key: Going to be with Jesus is the BILLION \$ suitcase!!

"Far better" is a translation from the Greek equivalent of a 'Big Mac' – a triple layer of comparatives, stacked on each another:

"Much more better"

Awkward grammar, because 1 word would not suffice!

Paul used 3 words for mega-emphasis.

Like in Finding Nemo, when Crush the Turtle's has triple emphasis for riding the current:

1] *Righteous!* 2] *Righteous!!* 3] *Koo-koo-kachoo in the Big ol' Blue!*

Speaking of *Big ol' Blue Sky*, the apostle John was probably tingling when he wrote of the return of Christ,

"When Christ appears... we shall see Him as He is!"

Jesus in His unveiled glory!!

For a Christian, dying, in a sense is *"jumping the queue"*, reunion with Jesus **before** His return . . . this was Paul's motivation, his 'personal preference'/desire was to be w/Jesus.

Before moving to point 3 . . . a couple *important* Clarifications & Challenges to us . . .

• **Clarification #1: Paul was NOT "Glamourizing" death for Christians!**

Paul was not naïve!

He knew full well that Gain for those going to be with Christ also meant Loss for those left behind. He teaches this very truth in Philippians 2:27

Indeed Epaphroditus was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have SORROW upon SORROW.

We still grieve/mourn at our loss of a loved one . . . but not like the world grieves, **without hope.**

A world that does NOT say, "to live is Christ", but says,

"Life is a sexually transmitted disease, and the mortality rate is 100%."

How's that for a coffee mug inspiration? Not a very sweet cup o' Jo!

That's a 'sugar-free' and 'hope-free' perspective if there ever was one!

• **Clarification #2: Is the *Timing* of our Death (Taking our life) our Choice?**

No!

The timing is God's, who gives us our breath and takes it away.

Paul is not writing "13 Reasons Why" anyone should take their life, nor is he writing an instalment of the *"Kevorkian Chronicles"* (Dr. Kevorkian's claim-to-fame is *ethanizing* people, aka, "assisted suicide").

We can GIVE our life to save others, but we cannot TAKE our life.
Suicide is not an option for Christians!

Paul is not considering packing it in, giving up, *“Goodbye cold, cruel world!”*
Remember Paul is speaking of a **WIN-WIN**, Phil 1:22,
“If I am to live on in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me.”

Paul knows it's not really his choice to make, but Caesar's, since Paul is on death row.
Paul is simply speaking as if the choice were up to him . . . Jesus is **so glorious**, it would be one difficult choice!

Kevorkian & others who equate “ending earthly Pain = Gain” have this **wrong-headed assumption**: there is no resurrection, no afterlife, no judgment, no eternal punishment.

Oscar Wilde, the flamboyant and philandering playwright tried to “trivialise” death, saying on his death bed,

“This wallpaper is appalling. One of us will have to go!”

Humour is powerless to cope with death! . . . Like the tombstone epitaph of a proud atheist, who jested,

‘Here lies an atheist; all dressed up with no place to go’

to which someone added a sobering comment:

I bet he wishes that were so!”

The Bible says *“a person is destined to die once and then comes judgment!”* (Heb 9:27)

- Die once – no reincarnation for 2nd, 3rd, 4th go at life!
- then comes judgment - giving an account to God for our life

LISTEN: Death is only gain for those trusting in Jesus Christ who *saves* us from the wrath we deserve, by taking our judgment/condemnation on Himself on the cross, forgiving us, reconciling us with God, bringing peace.

Those who die without Christ do NOT *“Rest In Peace”*

For those who reject Jesus, death is NOT “gain”, in any way, shape or form.

So I need to ask you the question . . .

Have you repented & trusted in Jesus as your **Lord & Saviour?**

The **Timing** of our Death is NOT our Choice
Our **Destiny** after our Death **IS** our Choice

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life!

*Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the **wrath of God** remains on him.*

- **Challenge #1:** v.21 begins, *“For me, to live is _____.”* ??

If there were a blank there, how would most of the World fill in the blank?:

For me to live is . . . to *accumulate, inebriate, fornicate, celebrate whatever is reprobate.*

I hear a growing number watch entire seasons of TV shows in 1 day! I reckon they'd sing,

“ALL that thrills my soul is Netflix, Season 3 is more than life to me, to me”

So let's shift from the world's answer to ours, and let the real Challenge begin!

- How would YOU fill in the blank, "*For me, to live is _____.*" ??

I think on this 'sinful side' of glory, it is wishful thinking to sing

"ALL that thrills my soul is Jesus"

(other good gifts from God thrill our soul as well)

But if right now, we cannot sing what MOST thrills my soul is Jesus,
Then we cannot say to die is gain.

If what fulfils my soul **most** now is my wife, my kids, tech gadgets, vocation, reputation, my possessions – then to die is **LOSS**, because what's most precious to me is **left behind** (remember, in heaven there is neither marriage nor being given in marriage).

Please get this:

When Paul says, "*For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain*"

He's saying joyful anticipation of being with Christ in the **future** is fully dependent on Christ being *most precious* to him **now!**

When people are **precious** to us, and news reaches us that we're going to visit them, or they're going to visit us, we rejoice in anticipation *because* they mean **so much** to us now.

But those people/relatives we think **little** of now (you know them!), the thought of spending time in *their* presence holds little attraction to us, little joy, little anticipation.

And the **painful truth** is, even for Christians too often, we do not long for heaven because **we think to too little of Christ.**

Paul is setting the stage for what he will unpack in Philippians chapter 3,

"I consider all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord!"

Surpassing Value. It's a matter of **worship, worth-ship**: valuing Christ above all

So renew your mind in deep Christian worship!

Sunday worship, private worship, family worship. Exult in Christ! Stott:

*Christian **EXULTATION** in God begins with the shame-faced recognition that we have no claim on Him at all, continues with wondering worship that while we were still sinners and enemies Christ died for us, and ends with the humble confidence that He will complete the work He has begun. So to exult in God is to rejoice not in our possession of Him, but in His possession of us.*

Preach the gospel to yourself daily, so Christ-centred joy **motivates** you to share the gospel.

The **1st** half of v.21 is the **KEY** half

to live is Christ

To die can ONLY be gain **if** to live is **Christ**

How do you fill in the blank? . . .

How will you renew your mind & value system in worship to get Christ into your 'blank'?

• **Challenge #2 – My Preference vs. Gospel Growth**

Paul's win-win scenario is between **SEEING Christ & SERVING Christ/His people**

1:22-23 *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.*

Because of Paul's Christ-exalting motivation, Paul's 'decision' (if you call it that) was *not* based on Paul's preference, but on Gospel growth.

His **Desire** comes 2nd to **Duty, gospel-driven Duty** (vv.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.

Death or life – either scenario can bring about glorying in Christ! **Win-win!**

Paul chooses the **more costly** way - LIFE - for their joy & progress in the faith.

Do you realise what a difference that mindset alone would make for the gospel here?

Not **my preference** but **your benefit!**

Not just any kind of benefit – a Christ-centred benefit: (v. 26)

“ . . . that you may have ample cause to GLORY IN CHRIST Jesus by my coming to you.”

O how we should want this! – that your presence, by your “coming to” . . . a meal, a homegroup, a prayer meeting, a working bee, a youth group – you coming to such would *“provide ample cause for others to glory in Christ!”*

But this only happens when we, like Paul, rejoice uppermost in Jesus, so that we gladly put gospel growth above personal preference, above & beyond our “comfort zone.”

So next time you enter a room – like morning tea in the hall today – ask yourself, **“This week, what has thrilled my soul about Jesus?”** . . . and as simple as the answer is, be ready & willing to SHARE it!

Then you will start to become a person like Paul, whose presence ‘provides ample cause for others to glory in Christ’ !! May Christ-centred joy motivate & fuel your interactions . . . This leads directly to Paul's shift in focus from him to us . . .

OUR PARTNERSHIP IN GOSPEL PROGRESS (1:27-30)

V. 27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you STAND FIRM in the one Spirit, STRIVING TOGETHER as one for the faith of the gospel.

1 spirit, 1 mind – **united** in the gospel & for the gospel

“Standing Firm” + “Striving” . . . these are **battle terms!** We must expect Opposition
Expectations are huge in relationships (always part of pre-marital).

So Expect Opposition! Paul explains in verses 28-30,

without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This [lack of fear, unity in Christ] is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, & now hear that I still have.

Paul was following Jesus's footsteps and he expects the same of us.

Bottom line: we're **partners** in the gospel, a **costly** partnership . . . but a "gift" (‘granted to suffer’, literally= “gifted/ graced” to suffer for Christ!)

“the Surpassing value of knowing Christ!”

is not just knowing the “easy bits” about Jesus, but every bit . . .

“that I may know Christ – the power of His resurrection AND the partnership of His sufferings.”

So Paul says, don't be discouraged, **don't think you're failing** in your gospel endeavour if you're opposed - to the contrary that's a sign of success & salvation for you.

I mean, Jesus & Paul, were the 2 GREATEST evangelists ever!

If, thru no fault of their own, the 2 greatest evangelists ever were *both* were opposed, . . . should it be different for us?!

Just make sure you're not opposed for being an *obnoxious jerk!*

Put on the full armour of God and let's contend for the faith, together, “partner”!

I'd like to conclude with 2 illustrations, one from each side of the ***win-win*** . . . one about ***life***/to live is Christ, one about ***death***/to die is gain . . .

1] Death - Sometimes dying IS better for Gospel Growth

In 1956, 5 young missionaries with so much potential – Jim Elliott, Nate Saint, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully, Roger Youderian – were ***martyred*** Amazon rainforests of Ecuador, speared to death by the *Waadani* tribe.

But did their deaths stop the Gospel work there?

No, **the Gospel is unstoppable – especially in death!**

As it was said it in the 2nd century, “*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church*”.

In direct response to the story of these 5 missionary martyrs, more than 1,000 college students volunteered for foreign missions, and more than 25 pilots promptly applied with *Missionary Aviation Fellowship* to fill Nate Saint's vacated position in Ecuador!

Sometimes dying IS better for Gospel Growth, *because*

Experiencing Christ as gain ***in your dying*** MAGNIFIES Christ!

Those Waadani tribesmen saw the 5 missionaries had guns capable of killing, but they chose not to use them, and instead chose to give their lives for gospel growth.

The Waadani were humbled, regretful, curious . . . sought out the missionary widows.

They invited them and their kids back to the camp.

These women – motivated by the value of knowing Jesus and making Him known – ***courageously*** joined the camp & shared Christ with them.
When the Waodani heard the gospel most of the tribe repented and trusted in Christ and were radically transformed.

Gain for Martyrs!
Gain for the Gospel!
A win-win, even in death!

2] Life - To Live is Christ

Our default is to consider “life” be easier route, and death the more difficult .
Yet, To live is *Christ*, not a *Cruiseship*
Life in Christ includes opposition and laying up treasures in heaven with “gains” that often are not realised in this life,

Nabeel Qureshi is a Pakistani American and former apologist for Islam.
While studying become a medical doctor, he became a Christian.
Nabeel speaks of his conversion from Islam and the cost of living for Christ.

The excerpt I will show you does not mention numerous death threats against him, but focuses on being disowned by his family, and the costs it has brought him . . . great cost now for following Jesus. But listen also for Nabeel’s “**motivation**”.
Here is 1 minute from his testimony, where he has just belaboured the gruesome details of Jesus crucifixion . . . for us!¹ **{CLIP}**

The cost in this life?
He says, “WORTH IT – absolutely!”
because Jesus is worth it!
To live is Christ!

If he is killed?
WORTH IT – because to die is Gain!

I look forward to morning tea now, where we can share with each other,
“This week, this is what has thrilled my soul about Jesus . . . !”

¹ 32 minutes 32 seconds to 33:59 of <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3IHueRXvh0&app=desktop>